

Robert Golladay

The Apostles' Creed



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The Apostles' Creed

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The Apostles' Creed

Sermons on the Catechism II

By Robert Emory Golladay, A.M.

PASTOR OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, COLUMBUS OHIO; AUTHOR OF
"LENTEN OUTLINES AND SERMONS," AND "THE TEN COMMANDMENTS"

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Dedication

To My Teachers

Prof. Herbert E. Greene, Ph. D., of the Department of English, Johns Hopkins University;

Prof. Joseph A. Leighton, Ph. D., of the Department of Philosophy, Ohio State University;

Prof. H. K. G. Doermann, of the Theological Faculty, St. Paul Seminary;

And the memory of Prof. Revere F. Weidner, D. D., LL. D., late President of the Chicago

Lutheran Seminary, my later mentor in the wider field of theological study,

This volume is respectfully dedicated

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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Introduction

OUR GOOD BROTHER Golladay really needs no special introduction for the second volume of his sermons on the Catechism. When the first volume appeared it was very properly introduced by Professor C. B. Gohdes, and this was done in so appropriate and lovely a manner as perhaps only a future Doctor of Letters could do it. This second volume finds its best and altogether satisfactory introduction in the preceding first one. Whoever has read and enjoyed the first one will not be willing to miss the second one. Still Brother Golladay has asked me to introduce this second volume in a few words, and I certainly am glad to fulfill his desire, though neither he nor his book needs my recommendation. I can assure the reader that, to say the least, this second volume is fully up to the standard of the first. The author handles his subject, in this case the three Articles of the Apostles' Creed, in a most thorough and attractive way. Every point contained in a member of these Articles or closely related to it is discussed on Biblical grounds, in model language, and in a captivating form. The author never forgets that he is to present the sublime saving truths of the oldest and universally recognized creed of the Christian Church, not simply to the intellect but also to the heart; he speaks from the heart and therefore also to the heart; his presentation is not only intensely interesting but also thoroughly practical. And therefore I can, and do, most warmly recommend this volume to every reader, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran; it will benefit both classes.

I can only give expression to my ardent hope that the author may be enabled by the grace of the Lord, whom he also serves in the publication of these Catechism sermons, in a comparatively short time to complete the whole series to the honor of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom. Finally let us hope that the excellent example set by the author may stir up a good many of his ministerial brethren to make a similar use of their talents.

F. W. STELLHORN.

Capital University, Columbus, Ohio., October, 1917.

Preface

AFTER CONSIDERABLE DELAY this second volume of sermons is offered to the Church. As the cause of the delay was personal, the public need not be troubled with the recital of details. It was unavoidable, that is enough.

The task of doing exacting work of this character, in connection with multiplied congregational duties, which dare not be neglected, is not light; but the kindly reception of my volume on the Commandments has heartened me for the task.

There will always be need of the Law. There will always be just as much need of the Gospel. As my former message was considered by many as throwing light on the pathway of duty, so may this help to clarify and impress anew what it is that we ought to believe.

Of the sermons on the Commandments, friend Gohdes says, "they strike straight from the shoulder"; may these prove that they come straight from the heart.

The manuscript for the third volume, on the Lord's Prayer, is almost ready, so that there promises to be little delay in its publication.

R. E. G.

Columbus, Ohio, October 1, 1917.

1. The Need Of A Creed

With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. — [Rom. 10:10.]

HAVING COMPLETED a series of sermons on the first chief part of the Catechism — God's holy Law — we now proceed to consider the second chief part, — the Apostles' Creed.

In our study of the Commandments we have been standing in the august presence of Almighty God. We have heard His thunder tones from Sinai, saying: "I am the Lord thy God"; "Thou shalt ..." "Thou shalt not ..." We have caught glimpses, such glimpses as sin-weakened minds and souls are capable of catching, of the exalted character which God's holy Law not only outlines for us, but demands of us. If we had come to our study of this Law without any knowledge of the Gospel we could only have become frightened, and have been driven to despair.

Sinai, the mount of the Law, stands before us as the moral Mont Blanc of the universe; its inaccessible summit crowned with the unsullied white of perpetual snow, and scintillating dazlingly in the rays of the morning sun. On this background of unsullied white and untarnished gold, God, the perfect artist, draws, in His Law, His conception of a perfect moral being. It puts to shame every human achievement. It is the despair of every morally aspiring life. No man, of himself, can ever hope to touch it. It sets before us a plan of life so exalted in its demands, so God-like in its character, that no unaided human power can ever hope, in this world, even to approximate it. But here is where the Gospel comes to man's rescue. It tells us what God Himself has done for us, paying the moral and spiritual debts we were unable to pay; preparing for our acceptance, free of all cost to us, the perfect righteousness which alone makes us well-pleasing in His sight.

The Apostles' Creed presents, in summarized form, the heart of the Gospel. This is, at least in substance, if not in completed form, the oldest of the three great statements of the Christian faith, known as the oecumenical,

or universal, creeds. The other two are the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds, respectively. We are now going to make a study of the Apostles' Creed. However, before we take up the several statements of it, we shall consider a few general points profitable for us to know.

The Outcry Against Creeds

The Apostles' Creed is one of the confessions of Christendom. It is regarded as the creed of all who call themselves Christians. But it is well known that, especially in recent times, there has been a great outcry against creeds of every kind. In a convention of one of the larger American denominations a few years ago, one of their leaders declared: "We are up-to-date doctrinally, we have no creed." On the table before me, as I write, there is a book with the title, — "Not Creed but Character." This is not altogether new, there always have been some who have taken this view; but it was especially symptomatic of the spirit of the generation just past. There is some evidence that this wave has reached its crest and is slowly subsiding. But we must never expect this opposition to cease.

Many of these modern religious progressives regard creeds in general, and especially the older ones, as relics of the childhood of our religion, hence no longer appropriate expressions of our mature manhood, with its advance in knowledge. The ideas begotten of evolution, of constant progression, have made these people intolerant of anything which bears the marks of age.

Some Christian bodies, as such, are opposed to creeds. A few of these are fairly evangelical, and decidedly active in the work of the Church, especially in the field of missionary endeavor. This reaction may have been, in part, the result of the abuse of creeds. For creeds may be abused, and are abused when men think that the formal acceptance of a creed is all that is necessary, and give all manner of evidence that the real faith of which the creed is but the statement has never been livingly appropriated. But the chief trouble with these people is that they fail to appreciate the real nature of creeds, and the part they have ever played in the conscious development of the understanding and appreciation of divine truth on the part of the children of God. Another point not to be lost sight of in this connection is the fact that these people, in spite of their protest against creeds, have a creed

nevertheless. And sometimes, in certain respects, a narrower and more exclusive one than those against which they protest. The fact that their creed is unwritten, or, if written, is not known as a creed, does not alter the facts in the case a particle.

These evangelical opponents of a creed, and by evangelical we mean those who claim the Bible as their creed and accept most of its teachings, sometimes have experiences which ought to open their eyes to the fallacy of their position. A few years ago one of the younger of the American denominations, having a platform one of the chief tenets of which is the cry for a creedless Christianity built on the broad and untrammelled truths of the Bible, celebrated the centenary of its founding. On this occasion one of their leading men gave emphatic utterance to doctrinal views diametrically opposed to the tenets for which they have stood as a church ever since their organization, which, indeed, was one of the points which led to their organization as a distinctive denomination. His utterances were strongly resented by his brethren. This shows, as before stated, that, in spite of their professions to the contrary, they have a creed. It further shows that no church can long exist, as a distinctive organization, without a well defined creed or confession.

The worst opponents, the real vandals, of the creeds, are not those aforementioned; but those who are altogether out of sympathy with the great formal principle of the Reformation, which is that the Bible is the revealed will of God, and the absolute rule of faith and life. To them the Bible also is but a human production, the writing of it a little more under Divine guidance than the ordinary literature of Christian people; but still to be corrected and improved from time to time. Naturally, then, in their opinion, creeds, or statements of doctrine, cannot be static, or authoritative; but must be revised to agree with their ever changing views of Scripture and divine things.

When the opposition of this class of men is sifted closely it is found not to result alone, or even chiefly, from a general dislike of creeds; but from a disbelief of many of the fundamental truths therein set forth. The doctrine of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the doctrine of sin, the person and operations of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection and the future life, are some of the more fundamental Biblical truths, disbelief of which is back of their dislike of creeds.

The cause of this rejection of Scripture, and the creeds drawn therefrom, is a false idea of liberty and authority. The motto of the ancient world was,

society is above the individual, the individual must be sacrificed, if need be, to preserve the authority and power of the State. This principle carried to the extreme, as it generally was, led to tyranny on the one side and abject slavery on the other. On the part of the Church, Rome is the supreme embodiment of this hurtful principle. The Reformation rightly assailed, and largely abolished, this false principle. But the true Reformation, represented by Luther, did not destroy, or seek to destroy, true authority. His only aim was to take it out of the hands of those to whom it did not belong, or abused it; to find the true authority, and uphold it. In all spiritual matters, in all matters of absolute right and wrong, the one infallible authority is God, and the revelation of His authoritative will is in His Word. But, as has ever been the case in human affairs, many were not satisfied with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free; they would no longer recognize God's authority as set forth in His Word. These men determined to be their own supreme authority. Their reason is to sit in judgment on God's Word. This is the real genesis, and the sustaining motive, of the fight against creeds. Against this Protestantism gone mad we protest just as energetically as we do against Rome's tyranny over men's consciences.

This same desire for unrestrained liberty is often turned so as to become a plea for practical accomplishment. These opponents say, if we abolish creeds see what a larger union of Christians might be effected. True, we might in this way make a greater show in the way of numbers; but would there be any greater unity? Could there be any more real co-operation? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3.) Is there so little reverence for God's truth; so little desire to stand for principle, so characteristic of many of the fathers that they were willing to sacrifice for it all they held dear in the world; that we can give it all up for a union in which there is no real unity? About the only basis of agreement left would be something like this: There is no infallible source and criterion of truth, hence we believe only in the right of everyone to believe as he pleases. To this we can subscribe — no — not for a moment! As long as the truths of God's Word are precious to us, we will follow the Apostle's exhortation, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and for the formulation of the statements of this faith in doctrinal confessions, or creeds.

The Creed and Its Purpose

Before a man hurls sneers, or anathemas, at a creed he should at least seek to answer for himself the aforesaid questions. But many evidently have not attempted this, or have consulted very unreliable authorities. What is a creed? It is a free, joyous, fearless declaration of the faith of an individual, or a Church. The great creeds are the Church's statements, in the shortest possible form, of what she understands God's Word to teach. But they are not mere intellectual summarizations of Scripture doctrines. The best thought of the best men of their respective ages was put into the creeds. But they did not have their birth in the cloistered study. They were born of the travail of men's souls in time of conflict. They were called forth from the souls of devout men in the dark hours when the truth they loved dearer than life was being assailed, perverted, and denied. The creeds of the Church are the children of love, for the bringing into life of which many surrendered their own lives.

The creeds are not Divinely inspired, and no one claims this for them. God's Word is the final touchstone by which these, and all other human productions, must be judged. And every Christian who is intelligent and wisely sincere in guarding his soul's interests, will search the Scriptures diligently to find whether the creeds he has been taught to accept have been drawn solely from this unpolluted fount. But while the Bible is God-given, and the creeds man-made, the latter are the confession, made to God and before men, of what those who are of one mind and heart find in God's Word. Such a confession God demands of us. Our own good requires it. Even the world expects it.

This point is often met by the assertion that those who object to creeds also make a confession; that they confess belief in the Bible. The Bible, they say, is their creed. This sounds very loyal, and has an appearance of plausibility which attracts. But let us examine it closely for a moment. All the Christian world professes to accept the Bible. Next door to you may live a man who professes to accept the Bible; but he refuses to believe in the clearly revealed Bible doctrine of the Trinity; he denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; he will not accept the doctrine of the atonement, which is the underlying truth of all Scripture; he scoffs at the idea of a bodily resurrection. He says he accepts the Bible, but he puts his own interpretation on

it; much of it he explains away. You have studied the Bible. You know that all these doctrines which your neighbor denies are clearly and emphatically taught there. And more, you have not only accepted these truths on the basis of authority, but the Spirit of God has wrought in your heart; you have also experienced the truth of these doctrines, you have learned to love them, they are exceedingly precious to you. This being the case, can you allow that man's statement to go unchallenged when he says, I accept the Bible, it is my creed? Are you willing to be known as standing on the same general platform with him? No, indeed. You point out to him his fallacy. You attempt to show him that he has no right to claim to accept the Bible when he positively rejects many, if not most, of its most fundamental doctrines. And, if you cannot prevail on him to change his position, you at least make clear to him what yours is. Now what have you done? Just what the early Christians did. You have made a confession of faith, a creed. Necessity has driven you to do so. You have met your neighbor's professedly Biblical, but, in reality, most unbiblical creed with a positive, Biblical creed. And you have found that, starting from a general statement common to both, you differed, as far as heaven is from earth, on most vital subjects. This is a statement of facts which may be verified in actual experience almost any day. Do we need any more convincing proof of the need of a creed?

The assault on creeds usually proceeds on the assumption, expressed or implied, that the Bible is God's Word, while the creed is not. As before stated, the creeds, as to their form, are not inspired; but the truth expressed, being a faithful epitome of Biblical doctrine, is just as much of God when embodied in the creed as the same statements are when scattered through a dozen or twenty books of the Bible. The statement of the Apostles' Creed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the son of the Virgin, is no less a Divine truth in the Creed than it is in the four Gospels. The only difference being that in the Creed the dress is human.

The purposes which a creed serves may be thus briefly stated. First, it summarizes Scripture for us. The doctrines of Scripture have an historical development, and many of them, an historical setting. Many of them were gradually unfolded through the centuries. A doctrine is usually presented at one place in Scripture from one point of view, at another place from a different viewpoint. One book or chapter develops one side of a doctrine, another book or chapter a different side. A creed gathers up these different threads of truth and presents them as one strand. The Bible is the quarry

from which the separate blocks of truth are cut, the Creed is a completed edifice.

In the second place, a creed is an interpretation of Biblical truth. Of this we have already spoken. It keeps the insincere from hiding behind vague generalities. It gives those who honestly and heartily accept Bible truth an opportunity of confessing, as God requires, their faith. And it is a support to us in our hours of weakness; a creed is a stabilizer. When confronted with appealing opinions, and a man's knees begin to tremble, he should turn to the old symbols, tried in the fires of a thousand battles, approved by unnumbered thousands of the best thinking, and best living, men and women who have ever graced God's earth; does this new claimant for acceptance agree with the age honored creed? If not there are the gravest of reasons why it should be scrutinized, not only by the best powers of our minds, but in the searching white light of the whole counsel of God.

Again, a creed is the watchword by which the true soldier of Christ's army is to be distinguished from the disinterested, the rebels, and the deserters. As no man should be ashamed of the flag of his country, or, if ashamed of it, give it up and seek another, so no one should be ashamed of the flag of Jesus Christ, the banner of His Church.

Finally, a creed is a heritage which we pass on to succeeding generations. It is the means by which we discover to our children, and children's children, our and their Christian succession, our oneness in the faith with the Apostles and the saints of every age. By means of the creed we preserve for our children, and transmit to them, the faith of the great historic Church, the faith drawn from the Sacred Word, tried in the fires and not found wanting.

God requires such confessions of us. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of them. And God has ever owned them, and given His blessing to those who made them. Peter made such a confession concerning the person and nature of Christ, and Jesus declares that it was a revelation of the everlasting Father Himself (St. Matt. 16:16.) The interpretation which Thomas put on the historic facts of Christ's passion, as far as he knew them, drew from him a denial; but other revelations caused him to change his mind, and called forth a positive creed, which elicited Christ's approval. And such passages as our text lead to the inevitable conclusion that some form of creed, embracing the fundamentals concerning Christ, was the customary requirement in Apostolic days of all those who sought entrance to

the infant Church. Our text is a weighty condensation of the whole Gospel, the doctrines concerning Christ and His atoning work. It requires faith in these Gospel facts. It requires that confession be made of this faith before the world, and implies that failure to make such confession results in the loss of the final blessing — eternal life. No stronger word can be uttered setting forth the need of a creed.

The Apostles' Creed

Brethren, there is not even the shadow of real cause for believing that the Apostles' Creed has been outgrown. It is, indeed, very brief, and the same conditions which, in the earliest days, necessitated the formulation of this creed, later demanded the formulation of fuller denominational confessions. These we should know, study, and love. But the elements of revealed truth essential to the existence of a Christian Church are in this old Creed. We should give it earnest, devout study, which it will richly repay. We should love it for its truth, for its age and sacred associations.

Let me give you an illustration of the hold this Creed has on the Christian world. The Baptist denomination, having in its communion many brilliant, devout, and evangelical men, is probably the most outspoken in its general dislike of creeds. But not many years ago, at a meeting of a world's Baptist convention, held in England, three thousand delegates were assembled. At the request of the renowned and eminently evangelical Dr. Maclaren, that assembly arose, as one man, and united with him in repeating the Apostles' Creed.

One of the most scholarly and painstaking books on the Apostles' Creed, from the point of view of historical treatment, is from the pen of a Scottish theologian of the Reformed Church. In the preface he tells us that he is ashamed to acknowledge that the Creed is rarely heard in the Scottish churches. He speaks with warmth of the folly and fraud of the act by which the church had been deprived of it. He relates how, on the continent, he had come to love it, and, ten years previously, had introduced it in the congregation he served.

Our love for the Apostles' Creed will stand in exact ratio to our intimate acquaintance with it, and our love for the great fundamental truths of the Gospel of which it is the synopsis. May we so know these truths that we

will not be disturbed by the outcry against the creeds. May we so know this Creed, and the living truths to which it gives expression, that when we repeat it we will be confessing the real faith of our hearts, without which there is no salvation.

2. The Apostles' Creed

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. — [St. Matt. 28:19.]

AT ALMOST EVERY SERVICE, at least in every chief service, of the congregation and Sunday school, we use the Apostles' Creed. It is a stated part of our service. And many faithful Christians use it, as did Doctor Martin Luther, as the daily confession of their faith.

What does this Creed mean to us? Is its recital the expression of a living, conscious faith; or is it a dead formality? Is its use a habit that would leave us feeling somewhat ill at ease if it were not exercised? or is it the putting into these old words the new life that throbs within? our expression of unity with the great Church of God? our declaration against all perversions and denials of God's truth?

We believe that on the part of our people generally, the Apostles' Creed is the honest expression of what they truly believe with respect to the greater fundamental truths of our faith. Unquestionably, however, there is still room, on the part of all of us, for a better understanding, and a livelier appreciation of this old confession.

The Apostles' Creed is not merely a child's confession. The child, indeed, at an early age, may learn its words, and a helpful measure of its truth; but no sage has ever exhausted it. It is like the ocean, the child may enjoy the waves as they roll up on the sandy beach, no man can touch its bottom where lie its deepest depths.

As we study this ancient symbol from Sunday to Sunday, comparing each statement with the Word of God from which it is drawn, I am sure we shall all find truths hidden here hitherto unsuspected. As a result, we shall love it more, and be able to put our souls more fully into it when we use it.

As intelligent creatures, endowed with the power of thinking and understanding, we ought never to be satisfied to use anything habitually, especially in the service of Almighty God, without seeking to understand it as

thoroughly as possible. There are a few matters concerning the Apostles' Creed the knowledge of which, though not of fundamental importance, should afford us a great deal of satisfaction. They are such points as these, how did we come to have such a creed? what is the source from which it was taken? who formulated it? and the like. The more important of these questions we will be able to treat under these two general heads, — The Biblical basis of the Apostles' Creed, and its historical development.

The Biblical Basis of the Apostles' Creed

Every Christian should be extremely careful as to the source of the principles he is asked to endorse and proclaim. Every Christian doctrine must come from God's Word. Every rule of conduct, to be binding, must come enforced by the "thus saith the Lord." This is the position of the Lutheran Church. We do not accept anything simply because the Church fathers may have advanced it, or because some man of learning and address of today may advocate it. A great many errors have been thus advanced. Whenever some principle, as professed truth, is presented to us for acceptance, the only right thing to do is to compare it with the inspired records of the Old and New Testaments. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). In this we follow the laudable example of the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily in order to find out whether or not the things proclaimed for their acceptance were true (Acts 17:11).

We must practice this principle with respect to the Apostles' Creed. The fact that it has been a confession of practically the universal Christian Church for sixteen or seventeen hundred years is strong presumptive evidence in its favor. To presume carelessly to say a word against a confession so ancient, so generally received and revered, would be the height of pride and folly. But under no circumstances can any one accept, without the most thorough possible personal investigation, anything which has to do with his soul's salvation on the mere word of any man, or body of men. We are dealing here with matters on which depend our hopes of heaven, and we should proceed with caution. For more than one reason, it is not possible for every one to make such a study of these matters as can be made by the trained theologian; but no one should rest satisfied till he has made such an investi-

gation as time and talent will permit. And any Christian, capable of reading and thinking along elementary lines, who will take our catechism, and study the second chief part, can soon convince himself that the Apostles' Creed, in all its parts, is taken directly from God's Word.

There are twelve members, or distinct doctrinal statements, contained in the Creed. The first article is the first one. Can anyone question for a moment that God is the universal Father? that almightiness is one of His attributes? that creation is His work? There can be no question that all these truths are taught in God's Word. Those who deny them must deny also the correctness of Bible teaching.

The second article of the Creed has six members. The first proclaims Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, our Lord; the second, His conception by the Holy Ghost, and His birth of the Virgin Mary; the third sets forth His treatment at the hands of Pontius Pilate, His death, burial, and descent into hell; the fourth tells of Jesus' resurrection; the fifth gives the story of His ascension, and assumption of the throne of sovereignty and glory in Heaven; the sixth relates the promise of His coming again to judgment. Is there anyone who will dare say there is a single statement here that is not found many times over, in the clearest, strongest language in God's Word? Just take your catechism and confirm this statement by reading again the many proof passages under these different points. We all know that some do not believe these statements of the Creed, but they disbelieve them in spite of the clearest teaching of God's Word.

In the third article of the Creed there are five members. The first one tells us that there is a third person of the Godhead known as the Holy Ghost; the second sets before us the fruits of the Spirit's work, the holy Christian Church; the third makes known the first and most essential step in the building of the Church — the forgiveness of sins; the fourth member reveals the great truth of the resurrection of the body; and the final one establishes the truth of that which is a universal hope, the fact that there is for the children of God a life everlasting. We can say of every one of these statements all that was affirmed of all the others, that they are in complete accord, not only with certain isolated statements of God's Word, but with its teaching as a whole. This we will establish more in detail, and by abundant quotations, when we take up the separate members of the Creed, or portions of them, for special study.

Brethren, let us not give way for a moment to the fear, which some would like to awaken, that we are following mere human opinions when we make confession of our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. We are giving expression to our faith in the very truths set down by holy men inspired of God; and in most instances in the very words of inspiration itself. Instead of being ashamed of this old Creed, which has expressed the faith of hundreds of millions, yes, which is being used this very day as the vehicle for expressing the faith of hundreds of millions, let us learn to prize it more highly by learning to understand it better. Then it will become more fully what it ought to be, the statement of what we wholeheartedly believe, the assured foundation of our hope.

Most of us, even professing Christians, do not appreciate our spiritual blessings as we should. Think of the hopes and fears which have perplexed the souls of the thoughtful heathen. As their literature shows, they sometimes caught lofty visions of the Divine Being, and His nature. But at best, how great was the uncertainty in which they lived with respect to some of the most profound problems of human life. Think of the pathos of that inscription on the altar that stood by one of the streets of that intellectual center of the ancient world — old Athens: "To the unknown god." That God was, they were convinced. That the destiny of man was in His hands they were equally sure. But who He was, how He worked, how His heart beat toward the children of men, no one knew. Equally pathetic was the inscription borne by one of the most famous of the old Egyptian temples: "I am He that was, and is, and shall be; but no mortal hath lifted my veil." No man by mere mortal strength has ever lifted it, or had strength of vision to penetrate it. But God Himself has lifted it. He has revealed to us in His Word all of His mind necessary for us to know. He has told us of the plans He has made for us, of what He has done, and is still doing, for their realization.

For us God has caused the sun to rise above the spiritual horizon. The day has dawned. For trembling consciences, driven by fear, conscious of a Presence they wholly failed to comprehend, facing a mystery of life for which there seemed no possible solution; for all these, living in the night and crying for the light, God has spoken His Word, "Let there be light." Men may now live in peace, and die in hope. And the sum of this precious truth we have in the Apostles' Creed. How we ought to appreciate it!

The Historic Development of the Apostles' Creed

We reaffirm that this Creed is not only in a general way in harmony with the teachings of God's Word; but that every phrase, and every thought in it can be substantiated by clear, positive statements of God's holy Word. But you will look in vain to find the Creed in any one place in the Bible. The Bible is a large book, indeed, it is a library of books. And the Apostles' Creed is the briefest kind of a summary, not of the whole Bible, but of its Gospel teachings. This explains its name, — the Apostles' Creed. It is called Apostolic, not, as some have thought, because it was written by the Apostles; but because it sets forth the kernel of the Apostles' teaching. Some, in times past, have even gone so far as to declare which one of the twelve members of the Creed was furnished by each Apostle. The claim that the Creed is of Apostolic origin, so far as its form is concerned, is historically untenable, and is held by very few Protestant investigators.

If the Apostles wrote the Creed before they left Jerusalem, or, as some even go so far as to maintain, immediately after the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, it is inconceivable that no mention would be made of it in the New Testament. St. Luke, author of the third Gospel, tells us in the introductory verses of this Gospel, that many had taken it in hand to set forth in order the things most surely believed among them, even as they delivered them who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. And he tells us that he is going to do the same. And remember, this Gospel was written at least twenty-five years after Pentecost. But in this record the Apostles' Creed is not given, nor is there any mention of its formulation. The second book of St. Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, written probably forty years after Pentecost, gives us the first Church history; but it has nothing to say of the writing or existence of the Creed. And as the Acts deal, in a very special way, with the activities of the Apostles, the silence of this book on the subject of the composition and existence of the Creed must be taken as conclusive evidence that it was not of Apostolic origin as to its literary form.

The true origin of the Apostles' Creed, according to the testimony of history, both sacred and ecclesiastical, is as follows: The last command of the risen Savior was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them

into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (St. Matt. 28:19). This passage is generally believed to be the germinating seed out of which grew the Creed. This passage was not only the formula used in the administration of Baptism, but it set forth, in a few pregnant words, the faith of those who were baptized. They were required to confess their faith in the triune God; in God the Father, the creator and sustainer of all things; in God the Son, the God-man, the redeemer of the world; in the Holy Ghost, the enlightener and sanctifier of the children of men. This is the testimony of the earliest and most trustworthy of the fathers. Athanasius, who became the patriarch of Alexandria in 328, says, “The whole sum and body of our faith is comprised in the words of our baptism, and is founded on that Scripture, ‘Go and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’” St. Augustine, the noted bishop of Hippo, born 354, says in his discourse on the Apostles’ Creed: “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself furnished us with this standard of doctrine, and no man of piety entertains any doubt respecting that canon of the Catholic faith, which was dictated by Him, who is the object of faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ, I say, after His glorious resurrection from the dead, and shortly before His ascension to the Father, bequeathed to the disciples these mysteries of faith, saying, ‘Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’”

These words of institution alone probably formed the original creed; a very simple, but, nevertheless, comprehensive confession. But in the course of time men arose who denied certain truths clearly contained, but not specifically stated, in this formula. And, step by step, explanatory clauses, taken from other portions of Scripture, were added. We do not know that there was any concerted action on the part of any of the leaders of the Church in developing the Creed. Indeed, the preponderance of evidence seems to confirm the opposite view. Under the stress of similar opposition, like confessions seem to have developed in different places; these being more fully developed in one province than another. This is what we know of this development of the Creed. In a letter written by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, to the Christians of Tralles, a town near Smyrna, he sets forth the faith which they should hold, and under no circumstances deny. He does not follow the order of the Apostles’ Creed, but his statement contains, either in so many words, or by unmistakable inference, more than half of the present

content of the Creed. And bear in mind that Ignatius died a martyr's death in 107, probably less than ten years after the last of the Apostles, St. John.

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, in the year 180, less than a century and a half after the death and resurrection of Jesus, gives the Creed in this form:

“We believe in one God the Father Almighty,
Who made the heaven, and the earth,
And the seas and all that is in them:
And in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
Who was made flesh for our salvation:
And in the Holy Ghost,
Who preached through the prophets the dispensations [of God],
And the advents [of Jesus Christ],
And His birth of a Virgin,
And His passion,
And His resurrection from the dead,
And the ascension into the heavens in the flesh of the beloved Jesus our Lord.
And His coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to gather up again all things unto Himself,
And to raise up all flesh of all humanity.”

You will observe that in the Creed as above given, before the close of the second century all the members are present but three, though they are not given in the later order. The absent members are those treating of the Church, forgiveness, and eternal life. These were not disclaimed. There simply had been no particular occasion for their development, though the idea of eternal life is contained in the doctrine of the resurrection.

Of this faith Irenaeus says that the whole Church, though scattered throughout the world, the Germanies, the Iberias, in Egypt, among the Celts, in Lybia, and in the central parts of the inhabited world, all held this faith as if it still occupied one house, and proclaimed it with one harmonious voice.

Tertullian, speaking for the Church of Africa, about the close of the second century, gives a statement of their faith which, though it does not follow the same order, presents virtually the same points which are found in the creed of Irenaeus.

It was in 337 that Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, in Asia Minor, wrote to a brother minister, setting forth what he had received from his predecessors,

and now proclaimed himself. This declaration of the tenets of the faith contains every article which we now have in the Apostles' Creed, and in exactly the same order as we now have them. The only difference is that most of the statements are not quite as complete as they are at present. This creed, older than Marcellus, but handed down by him as a heritage from 1600 years ago, is as follows:

“I believe in God Almighty,
And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son our Lord;
Who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary;
Crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried;
The third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;
From thence He cometh to judge the quick and the dead.
And in the Holy Ghost; the holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; the life everlasting.”

The History of the Apostles' Creed

What now is, in brief, the history of the Apostles' Creed? It is, in few words, this: Christ gave to the infant Church, in the baptismal formula, the simple fundamentals of the Christian faith. Opposition to these truths, and those implied in them, necessitated a gradual elaboration of them from other portions of clear Scripture teaching, with the result that in the first part of the second century, not more than seventy-five years after Christ's death, there was a nucleus of our present creed in existence. Before the close of the second century most of the members of it were formulated and confessed, though not fully, and not always in the same order. In the early part of the fourth century we find all the members of the present Creed, and in the present order. True, it is not till about four hundred years later, near the middle of the eighth century, that we find, in the writings of Pirminius, a Benedictine monk, who labored in France and Germany, the Apostles' Creed in exactly its present form.

A remarkable fact worthy of remembrance in connection with the development of the Apostles' Creed, a fact which distinguishes it from the Nicene and the Athanasian, is that this development was altogether independent of the action of Synods or Councils. It was a natural development,

an expression of the faith within the hearts of the early Christians, given forth under the pressure of opposition from without. It was a growth which sprang up in widely separated communities from the common seed of Christ's words. That which adds to the remarkable character of this development is the fact that up to the time when the Creed was virtually completed, Christianity was outlawed. Its confession, during most of this time, could not be published to the world, but had to be transmitted by word of mouth. Evidently the hand of God was in its development and preservation.

Is any one ashamed of this ancient symbol? Then it would seem he must be ashamed of Christ's own words; ashamed of those early heroes of the faith, not a few of whom sealed their faith with their blood. We are not ashamed of our Creed. And those who are ashamed of it are not worthy to be numbered with the noble army of saints and martyrs who have gone on before. Indeed, those who deny its truths read themselves out of the Christian Church.

The Apostles' Creed does not by any means contain all that we as Christians believe. It but lays the broad foundation on which much more must be built as we quarry deeper into God's Word. But we glory in this bond which binds us to the millions who went on their way before us confessing this faith, and with the millions who confess it now. And we are sure that to know it better will only lead us to love it still better.

3. Man The Believing Subject

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him. — [Gen. 1:26, 27.]

ONCE BEFORE, in beginning the study of a great subject, we stood face to face with the pronoun of the first person singular, — the I. It was in the study of the Commandments. There it was God who was the speaker. That “I” was the leading thought, not only of the first Commandment, but of all the Commandments. God’s “I” dominates every one of the Commandments. It is “I,” the great “I Am,” the eternal God who says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not steal,” and the like. And no man will ever rightly understand the Law till he has somewhat of an enlightened, satisfactory conception of the great Law-Giver.

Now, in the second chief part of the Catechism, we meet with another similar pronoun. Our Creed starts with an “I.” This time it is not the “I” of the Law-Giver, but of the Christian confessor. It is the “I” of one who is telling out before all the world what it is that he believes concerning the God who has first spoken to him.

What do we mean when we say “I”? Who, what, is this human creature which utters, so freely, and most of the time so thoughtlessly, this word of a single letter, but, withal, so rich in meaning. Have you never paused to ponder these thoughts, oh brother of the kindred dust? Next to the thought of God, my brother, these thoughts are most worthy of our serious, prayerful consideration. These are the thoughts which, rightly pursued, bring the largest dividends for the enrichment of the mind, and the strengthening of the spirit.

In order that we may rightly appreciate what it is that the “I” says when he repeats the Creed, and elsewhere, let us make a study, first of all, of what this “I” itself means. We will take as our theme, Man the believing subject.

And we will consider man, the “I,” as he was, as he is, and as he may become.

Man as He Was

The Biblical story of the beginning of things is stupendously sublime. It is said that after the creative work was done, God rested. Not that He was tired. It was a rest of satisfied contemplation of the magnitude and splendor of His handiwork, which, from every angle, reflected back His glory on Himself. But after the careful, thoughtful perusal of the record we actually need rest. It is a real effort, an exhausting effort, to follow the sacred penman. And even then we are painfully conscious of being able to follow the real depth of the thought less than a millionth part of the way. We are plunged into unfathomable depths, led into inaccessible heights, and across immeasurable expanse. Prostrate thyself, oh my soul, in humility before this problem of the infinite.

After all that Divine activity which, in rapid succession, peopled infinite space with teeming worlds, with each world-system the center of ever larger systems; that caused the mighty deep to stir with life; that made field and forest to be the playground of an endless variety of animate creatures; after all this, there was still something lacking. All that had been made declared the glory of God, but there was not a single thing which reflected His image. Everything around God was His handiwork, and bore His autograph; but there was not a thing which shared His spirit, not a thing to which He could really be a Father. Then it was that God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

Here, then, we have the inspired record of the origin of man. He is God’s handiwork, and God’s child. As to his body he is of the earth, earthy. As to his life, he received it out of the fullness of God’s own life. As to his mind and nature, he is the reflection of God’s own nature.

Man, then, is not a statue by a Phidias or an Angelo; he is not a mere conglomerate of chemical compounds; he is a living, thinking, feeling, willing being who has had a beginning, but can never have an end. Man is not merely this tenement of flesh and blood. There is something in this tenement which is larger, richer than the house in which it dwells; something

which animates and dominates it, and gives it its true worth. This is the real man, the real “I” which speaks in the Creed.

Man, even as he was originally, was not a god; but he was a son of God, and he bore the Father’s image. He did not possess what we know as the specifically Divine attributes, he was not almighty, or all-wise; but as a man he was perfect. And the crown of his perfection was this that he was holy as God is holy; with all the strength of his God-fashioned nature he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.

How we have dreamed of this primal man, who was a stranger to all ills, who was the sublimation of all created beauty and goodness; for whose pleasure the worlds were made, for whose companionship God came down from His central throne without thought of condescension. And, in spite of the fact that between this splendid creature, of whom Revelation gives us such enchanting glimpses, and ourselves as we are today, there is a world-wide difference, we still feel that there is a certain kinship between us. And there is something without calling us, and something within, though it may be no more than a hope, urging us to mount the steep and difficult way to the height where the vision stands. And there are vestiges, faint and deep hidden though they be, of that original man in all humanity. Man himself cannot touch the spark which will start the renewing process, but the potentialities are there. And this accounts for our ever hopeful dreams of better things. It is the immortality which stirs within us.

What an absorbingly interesting, and supremely important problem is this of human personality; that which the psychologist calls “The self,” of which we are always conscious. “This self” knows that even the body, in the strictest sense, is not “I,” but mine. The real secret of man as a self-conscious, volitional being, with all his hopes and fears, is that back of him, above him, surrounding him on every side, besetting him everywhere, there is a parental, sustaining Personality, and that through our own nature, and through all creation around us, this original, uncreated Person, God, is upholding us, speaking to us, seeking to influence us.

The “I” of the first article of the Creed, however, is not all of the “I” of this confession. Indeed, man as we have spoken of him, is only God’s revelation of what he was once, but is no more. To get the full picture of the “I” of the first article we must further study

Man as He Is

Man as he is, the man who tills the fields, builds cities, and carries on commerce — this brings us into a sphere where we are more at home; but, though we can here speak more from experience, there is still much divergence of opinion among us. It depends on whether men speak from the Book or not, whether they follow their own opinions, or God's revelation.

There are those who consider man as he is a vast improvement on man as he was. They compare man as he is, with his knowledge and achievements, with an imaginary, infinitesimal creature of the slime and the ooze. We, speaking by the Book, study man as a creature who came down from the sublime heights to the slime and the ooze; not in the sense of form and size, but as to nature and conduct.

Man, as he is, is worthy of sympathy, and deserves study. He achieves wonders. With his self-devised instruments he brings down the distant planets to his observatories; he makes himself wings and sails up into the ethereal blue; he contrives appliances and throws out signals which his brother, separated by the breadth of continents, and the width of oceans, gathers up from the circumambient air; he sets his inventive genius to work, and as a result he is able to submerge himself and mingle, in their native element, with the inhabitants of the briny deep; he analyzes and compounds everything about him; he delves into, discovers, and harnesses the secrets of nature. It is, indeed, a wonderful picture given us to contemplate; but to this obverse face of the picture there is a reverse face not so pleasant to behold.

Let us go back to our text, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him." This image of God in which man was created meant not only a large measure of power; but God-likeness, a love of the things God loves, the desire to do the things God wills. Let us see how matters now stand. Think of a man who is the reflection of God's image, then look out on the passing show. We see selfishness and greed written large all over men and their actions; we see them plotting, scheming, lying; we see the face which should reflect the light of purity wearing the lecherous smile; those who should be standing upright in the light of day, we see crouching like criminals in the dark; men and women, who ought to be living strong, robust lives, and dealing with the verities which build life, we see bartering away their crown of manhood and womanhood for baubles

and gaudy tinsel. In view of all this, does it not seem blasphemous to say that God made man? It would, indeed, be blasphemous to say that God made man as he is.

Man is still, in many respects, a wonderful creature. He devises and executes great things. But he is no longer as God made him. There is now much of the demon in him. Just think of the titanic struggle being waged at the present time by the flower of the human race; a struggle in which is being used every engine of destruction which human inventive genius has been able to devise; see how the aged and infirm, women and children, have been driven out by the hundreds of thousands to perish of hardships, cold and starvation. To look on this inferno of hate, caused all around by an equal degree of pride and greed, and say that God made man thus would be sacrilege.

Man himself, even in his worst condition, has a vague, uneasy consciousness that something has gone wrong, that he is not as he should be, not as he once was. There is something within his own breast which accuses him. He deals out death, but is himself afraid of it. He acts a fiend, but tries to excuse his conduct; he is selfish and grasping, but tries to justify such means by calling them the elements which make for progress. But deep down in his own heart there is a feeling that this is a perverted kind of life, and that it cannot continue to go unchallenged, that if it does not meet a just recompense of reward here, it will do so hereafter.

What is the explanation of these contradictory phenomena in human life? To find it we must leave that bright picture of the first chapter of Genesis, and go to the third, where we have the sad story of man's undoing, his deception and fall. Man lost his first estate. He still remained a man, but he lost the image of God. In other words, God Himself now calls man a sinner; a poor, ruined, perverted shadow of his former self. He is a dreamer of vain dreams, a follower of the *ignis fatuus*. He justly rests under sentence of condemnation. The poison of death unceasingly flows in his veins.

Richly as man deserves his fate, God does not willingly leave him to it. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." And out of the fullness of His wisdom, and the richness of His pitying love, He devised a plan for man's restoration. God became the author of a new creation in the sphere of humanity. He himself, in the person of His only begotten Son, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This God-man paid man's debt of transgression. He revealed again God's Fatherhood. He showed the

world once more what a perfect man is, and how he acts. He established the institution, and ordained the means, through which the power of the life that is in Himself may begin in man the work of restoration. Not the original man in his glory, not the natural man as he is in his sin and shame, but the redeemed, and partially restored man, is the one who speaks the threefold "I" of the Creed. But there is yet more to be said, hence we will consider

Man as He May Become

We are not to rest content with a picture of that which has been made possible for man. The possible has, in all these ages, been becoming the actual. In all these centuries the image of God in man has been in the process of restoration. This world has held men and women, they may be seen today, in whose soul there burns, in whose face there shines, the light of a new life; recollection brings from their eyes bitter tears of sorrow for the sins by which their lives have been marred; they are in love with truth, purity, righteousness; selfishness has been cast out, love has come in; they are giving and living to serve. Oh, yes, there have been men and women, there are men and women today, and many of them, when we come to think of it, whose faces reflect the light of heaven, whose conduct bears witness that its inspiration was gained from heavenly sources. In the presence of such people it is easy to believe the statement that man was made in the image of God.

This process of restoring the image of God in man may be seen not only in the lives of individuals, but in the life of nations as well. We are not living in the millennium. Sin is still widespread and dominant. But the light has been spreading, the life has been growing. Not to hold this proclaims ignorance of history, and disbelief of God's own proclamation. In spite of widespread moral blindness, in spite of frequent outbreaks of bestiality and Satanic craft and cruelty, the standards of national morality have been slowly, but persistently, revised upward. In spite of the all but universal cataclysm of apparent hate and bloodlust, there is more real brotherhood in the world today than ever before at any one time.

Even the mass of the men in the trenches, being there by the mandate of the few in authority, have but little of real hatred in their hearts for those against whom they are compelled to raise the death-dealing hand. And

many a time on the field of carnage, as those opposed have both received the thrust which meant death, they have forgotten all rancor, ministered to each other's necessities, and entered the presence of the great Judge as brethren. And the day is approaching when there will be such a brotherhood of man that the congress of nations will take away the despotism of the few. In that Christian democracy of humanity war, and all kindred violence, will be relegated to the limbo of outgrown barbarities, on which men will look with the burning cheek of shame. Then, more and more, questions of polity will be solved by processes of a regenerated reason, and a sanctified common sense.

But let us not forget that as human beings are naturally born into the world one by one, so the moral and spiritual renovation of society is brought about by the renewal of the individual. When men and women, as individuals, catch the higher vision, and entertain it as their own ideal; when this ideal is realized in the love of purity and righteousness; when men and women have caught the vision of a development of their own lives which shall go on unfolding till it finally ends in perfection, in God-likeness, then have been opened the sluices for the inflow of that God-given light, and power which shall finally result in the restoration in man of the perfect image of God. This is what we are privileged now to see in the process of becoming.

There is, however, another picture which shows us man, not in the process of becoming perfect, but in absolute perfection. It is the picture of Jesus Christ. Whatever more He was, He was a true man. And He teaches us what we may become. The Jesus of history teaches us what each of us may become in purity and goodness; the ascended Jesus of the throne teaches us what we may become with respect to glory. Oh, look up, ye weary, and oftentimes disconsolate, sons of men. Here is the measure of man's capacity. Here, in Jesus, is the pattern of what we shall be; for it is plainly said, we shall be like Him. Here is the prophecy of our destiny, and our dominion.

When Jesus was on earth, there were times when the pent-up glory within burst through the hiding veil of flesh, and transfigured Him, so that even the garments He wore became radiant with glory. What, then, must that humanity be as it sits on heaven's high throne. But it is said to you, my brother, and to me, and even to those afar off: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on my throne." He who came to share our nature, that

He might bring it back to itself, which means back to God, invites us to share His glory and His dominion.

Does the splendor of the vision dazzle us? Does it seem too good to be true? Great as is man's power and resourcefulness, the exalted nature of this vision of man's possible future would crush him into utter hopelessness with respect to attaining it, if it were not for this that He who gives us the vision is the One who gives us the power for its attainment. Jesus is not only the pattern of the perfect life, He is its power; He is not a specimen put on exhibition only. He is the source of what He inspires. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh for the express purpose of enabling us to attain to the likeness of His body of glory. The Christ of the cross, appropriated by faith so as to become the living Christ in the heart, is the certification of our participation in the dignity and glory of the Christ of the throne.

All the progress made in the upward way, by individuals and nations, came as a result of the spread of the Gospel of the redeeming Christ. And all the still more wonderful progress still to be made, can come only by the living appropriation of the Gospel of the same redeeming Christ. Oh, brethren of a common nature, of common ills, common hopes, and possibilities, as we love ourselves, as we love our brethren of humanity, let us become missionaries of the Gospel of the Christ who saves, and makes men new.

4. Christian Faith

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
— [St. Mark 16:16.]

MAN, the one who says “I” in the Creed, is of right royal descent. The King of heaven is his Father, and he once bore the Father’s image. Even in his ruined, lost estate, man still bears some vestiges of his origin and original character. And though he steel his heart against his Father, refuse all His proffers of help, and sink down to endless perdition, man will forever carry with him some few evidences of his divine sonship. But it is the one who can truly say, I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who has started on the way the end of which means the complete recovery of his long lost heritage, the restoration of the Father’s image.

“I believe in God.” Only those on whose minds and hearts there has fallen the warming, life-giving Spirit of God, only those who have learned to know God through Christ Jesus, can truly say these words. Nature, as a mirror, reflects the glory of God; but there is nothing here which corresponds to man’s, “I believe in God.” “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.” And in many things the members of the lower animal kingdom show that they are acting on the impulse of divinely implanted laws. But to none of them is it given to say anything like man’s confession, “I believe in God.” And brutish men, those whose souls are cluttered and clogged with thoughts of only material things; those whose minds and hearts are seared by the fires of lust, — none of these can truly say: “I believe in God.” Only where the Spirit of the living God Himself has brushed away the cobwebs from man’s brain, and burnished the windows of his soul, can the “I,” that which constitutes the true inner man, look out into the face of that unseen but all-embracing Love, and say, “I believe in God.” It takes true manhood, womanhood; it take an “I” which has come into consciousness of its true self, as to its origin, present condition, and future possibilities, to say aright, “I believe in God.”

The words believe, and faith, are such fundamental ones in the Creed and all Scripture, that every Christian ought to be vitally interested in the subject. So much depends on faith that we should earnestly seek to know all that we can about it. Let us, then, today take up for further consideration the vitally important subject of Christian Faith. Let us see what the Word of God has to say about its necessity, its nature, its content, and its conquests.

1. The Necessity of Christian Faith

The necessity of Christian faith no one can question who knows and accepts Scripture teaching. From the words of our text we learn that belief is one of the indispensable conditions of salvation. "He that believeth not shall be damned." In the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:6), the Apostle says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In this chapter we have an account of a line of the heroes of the faith, some of the men and women who, from the beginning of human history, have been bound together into one glorious company by this great controlling principle of human life, faith in God.

Just preceding the aforementioned passage in Hebrews there is a statement concerning Enoch. If we go back to the account of Enoch's life, as briefly given in Genesis, we find no statement concerning his faith. Why, then, is he mentioned here as one of the lights in this brilliant galaxy of the heroes of the faith? I think the Apostle explains himself. He says, "Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God." What a simple, but withal, what a beautiful and significant statement, "He pleased God." These words are a commentary on the necessity of faith in that they show why the unbeliever cannot please God. He does not walk with God, he has not the mind of God, he does not trust God. Faith is just walking with God, as the child walks with a parent; it is enjoying the Father's company, leaning on the Father's arm, listening to the Father's counsel, joyously running the Father's errands. This is faith, this is spiritual life, which two things, in the final analysis, are practically one.

It is by faith alone that man is able to appropriate the salvation which God has prepared for him in Christ Jesus. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Right after this splendid, comforting passage, the Divine record proceeds thus: "He that believeth on Him is not

condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Here we have one of the most decisive, of the many emphatic, and oft repeated, Biblical statements that apart from Christ there can be no spiritual, no eternal life for man; and that Christ, with all His gifts and blessings, is received alone by faith.

Indeed, a considerable portion of God’s Word would have to be transferred to this page if we wished to give the passages which treat of the necessity of Christian faith. By faith do we become Christians; with the begetting of the first spark of faith by the brooding Spirit of God, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Christ. Faith is the secret of growth in the Christian life. Only to those who have faith comes the peace and joy which was Christ-bought and is Spirit-given. Only to those who have faith in Christ are the portals opened which admit to the endless blessedness of heaven.

We might at this point pause to illustrate the fact that the whole fabric of human society reveals the necessity of faith. In dealing with things purely temporal and earthly there is scarcely a step in human life which does not demand the exercise of faith. We simply leave this thought with you for your own easy verification; and for further elaboration elsewhere. But how this emphasizes the rationality of faith in the sphere of religion.

2. The Nature of Saving Faith

The nature of saving faith is a point of vital importance. The necessity of faith receiving such an emphasis as it does from the lips of God Himself ought to lead every interested person to investigate carefully as to what this thing is to which so much importance is attached.

Men have often been mystified by regarding faith as a quality or action of the soul exercised only in religion. In every walk of life men exercise faith. It is a principle of the every-day life. The chief difference between Christian faith and the faith of the every-day life is not in the nature of the thing itself; but in the cause awakening the faith, and in the things on which it lays hold.

Without faith, as men and things are now constituted, there could be no coherent, progressive society. When thinking people marry and establish a

home it is a venture based on faith. Every business undertaking, however carefully the probabilities may have been weighed, and the elements of chance eliminated, is made in faith; faith in the continuance of ability to meet requirements, faith in the stability of present conditions, or in the regular development of conditions anticipated. The young people who sacrifice ease, and spurn the frivolities to the pursuit of which so many give themselves, and live laborious days, because they are preparing for the future, are building on faith, — the faith that future rewards will more than compensate for the present sacrifice. The farmer sows his fields, and in faith awaits the harvest.

In all these things of the world, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. In all these things men are building for the future, basing their judgment on what they know of the laws operating in the past. Thus we work by faith seeing the harvest in the future, and enjoying it by anticipation.

Christian faith has marks differentiating it from non-Christian faith; but to remember the things they have in common, to remember the motive power of any kind of a living faith in a man's heart, should effectually dissipate the stigma with which the unthinking would brand Christian faith.

Christian faith, like all real faith, has in it an element of knowledge.

“How can they believe in Him of whom they have have not heard?” “Faith cometh by hearing.” Where there is no knowledge there can be no faith. But we do not confine knowledge solely to intellectual comprehension. And, indeed, there is comparatively little of our Christian knowledge which is demonstrable. Faith is a Divinely-wrought living experience of the soul of man. Faith is not a cold, speculative, indifferent acceptance of the theory concerning God; but the surrender of the heart to the personal Being who has created, redeemed, called, enlightened, and saved us. Faith, at least where it has come to some degree of maturity, is not an uncertain, trembling waiting for deliverance; but, while it is the cause, it is also the blessed experience of it.

Christian faith is not built on reasoning merely, as is the faith concerning the affairs of the world of which we have spoken. Men everywhere, and in all ages, have concluded that there must be an adequate cause for the phenomena around us. From the study of our own hearts, our fears, our longings, our aspirations, our hopes, men have concluded that we are not the sporadic children of chance; but the offspring of a common Father, who is

anxious to help us realize our soul's dearest hopes. But Christian faith, while it thankfully appropriates all the benefit from the aforementioned considerations, is characterized by this that it is based on the revelations which God has made of Himself, His plans, and His work in His Word. And our faith in this Word is Spirit-wrought; it is not something to which we come by the processes of mere human study and meditation. But the means which the Holy Spirit uses in awakening Christian faith is the Word of God.

3. The Content of Christian Faith

The content of our Christian faith is another subject worthy of our serious consideration. In other words, what is it that we are to believe?

So far we have spoken of faith as a principle dwelling in the Christian's breast. In theological language, we call this the subjective faith; that living, appropriating, moving principle which dwells in the soul of man, the believing subject. This faith in the soul is begotten by, is based on, and nurtured by certain principles or truths which have an existence in themselves outside and independent of man. These truths form the content of our faith. They are the things believed. This is sometimes called the objective faith.

Not all religious faith is Christian faith. The Mohammedan, the Buddhist, and the Confucian each have a faith, they believe something; but it is by no means Christian faith. Neither are the unfounded opinions of men concerning religious things deserving of the name Christian faith, though too large a part of the so-called faith of many people is but little more than this. Indeed, not a few people think that it does not matter materially what a man believes, just so he believes; thus making the benefit to lie in faith as an act of man, rather than in the objects which man appropriates by faith.

The content of Christian faith, reduced to its simplest terms, is Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Savior. It is written that God justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). When one knows himself to be a poor lost sinner, deplores and confesses it; and recognizes Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, and with the confidence of his heart, weak and trembling though it be, reaches out to lay hold of Jesus as his Savior, that man has faith; God receives that man, forgives him, justifies him, makes him an heir of all His spiritual blessings.

There is, however, a larger content of Christian faith. Every word of God has been given as a proper object of faith. And as the child of God grows in the knowledge of revealed truth, the Bible, these truths, all of which are more or less closely related to Christ Jesus and His redemptive work, become part of the content of his Christian faith. There are degrees of faith, both as to the range of things believed, and the strength with which they are held. In both it is the earnest Christian's purpose to increase his faith. And this growth comes from careful, prayerful study of God's Word, by faithful attendance at the table of the Lord, and by Spirit-wrought obedience to God's expressed will.

As to the Apostles' Creed, the words "I believe" refer to every statement therein contained; and they present a summarization of all Divinely revealed truth. And this is a personal confession. Each one says, this is my faith. Is it so in very truth? Is the repetition of this ancient summary of the Christian faith a mere form with us, or is it the sincere expression of what in our hearts we truly believe?

4. The Conquests of Faith

And now just a word as to the conquests of faith.

Not a few people look on faith as a thin, nebulous, bloodless something, much as the stuff of which dreams are made, and, consequently, having very little power for the accomplishment of practical things of moment. It is evident that such persons do not know what faith is, either by experience, or by way of its actual achievements as they have become records of history. A real faith is the greatest motive power that can find lodgment in the human breast. Faith is a burning power, a tremendous energy. It produces boldness and richness of character. The man who has most faith does most. This is true in every walk of life. It is especially true in the sphere of religion. And the secret of it is this, Christian faith does not only mightily spur men on to action, it draws sustenance and power from the very heart of God. Christian faith is not only man's truest self, the highest life of the soul; it is a wonderful God-given faculty by which, as with a thousand tentacles, man's soul lays hold of the life and power of God, to which God gives Himself to be used of man in the accomplishment of His own great work.

Faith does not only make men valiant in action. What is in many respects much harder, it makes men courageous, and patient, and even joyful, when called on to endure. It is never easy for men and women to bear affliction; but to those of an active, impetuous temperament it is especially difficult. Their souls cry out for action. It is hard to think even, as we say, of being laid on the shelf. The natural tendency, under such conditions, is to fret and chafe. But faith which knows the fatherly love of God, and the wise benignity of His overruling providence, makes strong to bear all burdens. And to bear them, not with the helpless despair of utter weakness, but oft with a finer courage than is often seen in the strong and active, with a calmness and inner joy which impels the resigned soul to sing songs of victory in the darkest hours.

The first great conquests of faith are wrought in the heart, the inner life, of a man. Faith is the eye of the soul by which that unseen to the physical senses becomes visualized and certain. God, and heaven, and eternal life and glory are brought into the living present. And the coming in of the Divine drives out the carnal, the weak, the vicious. Faith purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). The man of a living Christian faith cannot be little, mean, or vulgar. Faith chains up the base passions, or by Divine alchemy changes and harnesses them for godly service. Faith transforms the vilest sinners into saints; saints first of all by the appropriation of Jesus Christ with His righteousness, saints also in the ever growing realization of the Christ-ideal in the life and living of the believer. By faith the soul, dwelling in the secret chamber with God, is unmade and remade; old things lose their hold, new things, the things of God, take root and grow in the new soil of the soul. Faith overcomes the fascinating allurements of the merely material and sensuous; because it realizes their intrinsic littleness, transitoriness, and fatuity; and, in contrast, the immeasurableness, permanence, and power of the spiritual and Divine. Everywhere are to be seen the moral victories, the spiritual triumphs, the lasting achievements wrought in the lives of individuals, who have been taught by faith to build, on the ruins of their own dead lives, higher, better, more lasting, eternally beautiful things.

By faith the narrowness, hatred, and vindictiveness of Saul was changed into the wide-eyed vision, the world-embracing love, and the astonishing energy of Paul. This same faith is the secret of that astonishing determination which led a frail body to perform miracles of constructive work in building up God's Kingdom. By faith the superstitious, fearful, trembling

monk of Erfurt became the increasingly fearless and powerful Reformer, who brought spiritual and civic liberty to half the world, and greatly weakened the fetters which bind the other half. And the same essential internal transformations have been going on, and are still going on, in the souls of ten thousand times ten thousand of the sin-fettered sons and daughters of men all the world over. Mighty is the power of a real, living Christian faith. It wields the power which created and rules the world. This power is limited only by the weakness of the vessels which contain and use the treasure. Not till Christ, the Mighty Son of God, has lost His power shall those who livingly lay hold of Him be utterly weak.

What splendid victories have been won in the world by the power of Christian faith. An hour before Gethsemane Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He broke the power of evil, and made it possible for every disciple of His to become victor over all the powers of darkness. In the faith of the Son of God what victories have been won. Humanly speaking, how insignificant and inauspicious was the beginning. What successful attacks Paul made, single handed, on the very citadels of godlessness. And soon empires yielded to the attacks of the few faith-filled disciples, armed only with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and fired with faith in its power. Faced by all the serried ranks of the allied hosts of evil, the conquests have continued. Temporary reverses come, as the Master plainly foretold. At times the old weakness reasserts itself, and, in the face of the menacing threats and seeming victories of the devil-led hosts of greed and lust, we ask, — are we making progress? Is ultimate victory assured? Avaunt such littleness of faith! Get thee behind me, Satan! We shall win, for "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

5. The Ultimate Ground Of Faith

He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. — [Heb. 11:6.]

We start out in the old, oft repeated, Creed by saying “I,” I who am a self-conscious, rational creature; I who know whereof I speak, “I believe.” Yes, assuredly we believe. We cannot have lived very long in this world, we cannot have thought very deeply, we cannot have paid much attention to the many intricate things in our own lives, and all around us; unfathomable, many of them, but still persistently with us; working, some of them, with the regularity of the clock; we cannot have spent our lives in beholding these things without having come to some conclusions concerning them. These conclusions are of the nature of beliefs. We hold certain things to be true.

On the part of man universally these thoughts about the primary phenomena of the universe, and human life as the most significant part of the visible universe, lead to one universal deduction: back of the visible there is something not tangibly revealed; back of the things made there is a Maker; back of life there is a Life-giver; back of all discernible movement there is a Mover; back of all the beauty there is an Artist. And all the world has united in calling this wise master-builder, this almighty ruler — God.

In the Apostles’ Creed, however, we are not speaking of general, or philosophic beliefs. We are speaking here as Christians. We are here confessing not alone what we believe as a result of deduction, but what we believe as a result of the revelation which has been made to us. The Creed is a statement of Christian beliefs.

The truths, or facts, set forth in the Creed, concerning which we say, I believe, are comparatively few and fundamental. The most fundamental and comprehensive statement of the Creed is that contained in the first clause — I believe in God.

I Believe in God

How can thinking people say otherwise than, I believe in God. Not to hold this faith throws everything into confusion worse confounded. Without belief in God human life, all life, becomes an insoluble riddle. And the nice adjustments, marvelous and invariable movements and functions of the universe add to the enigma.

The airship, submarine, and wireless communication are some of the wonders of our modern age. They rightly elicit the unstinted admiration of every serious thinker. Did they just happen? Did they spring up like the mushroom over night? No! They are the product of mind intensely and continuously applied. The laws in accordance with which these inventions operate have always existed. They needed only to be discovered and applied. It took wisdom patiently and intensely applied to do this. We are living in the midst of a universe so intricate, so nicely adjusted, with operations so perpetual and invariable that the highest achievements of man pale into insignificance by their side. Shall we say that in the limited sphere of human endeavor the activities of mind are absolutely necessary for constructive, regulative work; but that in the limitless sphere of world-activity there was, and is, no constructive, controlling mind? It is unthinkable! It was the Divine mind which inspired the declaration:

“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). And the world has not accepted the fool’s dictum.

The fact that nature, in all her diversified forms, clearly teaches the existence, and points to the operation, of a Being far, far above human reach in wisdom and power is attested by the practically universal conviction of mankind. The teaching of nature is so plain that there can be no other conclusion. Man does not need to be educated, by an artificial process, into believing that there is a God. In the sense of believing in a God, man is naturally religious. He does, however, have to be artificially educated out of believing in God. But we doubt whether it is ever successfully done. There are many who say there is no God, and some who doubtless wish there was none; but it is questionable whether there are any who, in their inmost hearts, are really convinced that there is no God. If there are any such they

come to this state only by years and years of fighting against their own natural, innate convictions. And the evidence is not wanting that many of the most distinguished opponents of belief in a personal God, men who derided this belief as a superstition which needs to be eradicated from men's souls before they can come into their own, could not entirely rid themselves of this belief. What is the explanation of this fact? Simply this, God is the author of man's being, as well as of all other parts of creation. He put the marks of His handiwork on man's mind and soul as He did on all other parts of creation. Indeed, nearer than any other creature of which we have knowledge, man is related to God. He was created in God's own image; after the pattern of God's own wisdom and holiness. God has written His sign manual into the very texture of man's conscious being, into the warp and woof of his very life. Sin has done much to deface this writing, the writing graven on every page of the book of nature, with special clearness on man's own soul; it has made the writing difficult to read; but it has not been, and it never can be, wholly eradicated. The devil, with all his ingenuity and malignant power, will never be able to do it. God will not do it. He has written His autograph on everything, and it cannot be erased.

That man has not been mistaken in his reading of the signature of almighty God written all over nature, and attesting His wisdom, power, and goodness, is the witness also of Revelation. The Word of God confirms what men have everywhere found written on the face of nature. The Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge" (Ps. 19:1-2).

To those who were finding fault with the ways of Providence, as many still do, the afflicted man of God says, "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee and the fishes of the sea shall declare it unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:7-10). And St. Paul says,

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20).

Christian people, however, receive but a comparatively small part of their knowledge of God from the book of nature. Every page of this book is covered with characters written with the finger of God. And it is written large and fair. But when it comes to reading this message the natural man is a very incapable pupil. And even the newborn children of God have a large measure of astigmatism when it comes to this task, save as they read in the light of Revelation. The message is wholly trustworthy, but our vision is blurred. Cobwebs fill our brain. Sin grows them.

When we wish to learn with absolute certainty of God's existence; especially about His nature, works and disposition, we go to another book of God's writing — the Bible, God's inspired Word. Here we are told about God, not by His works; but by Himself. Here we are given still other visions of God, visions which not only fill us with wonder and admiration, but which touch and melt our hearts. When one has looked closely into the book of nature he says, I am sure there is a God, there must be. When a man has looked carefully and lovingly into the book of Revelation, he says, I know there is a God. He has laid His hand on my soul. Man then not only believes that God is, he believes in God. There is a touch already of confidence in man's soul.

The final proof, to the Christian, of the existence of God, the proof which puts the foundation under all other foundations, is Jesus Christ.

"No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Jesus proved Himself God. We know that there is One in whom centers all the powers attributed to that eternal, invisible Spirit who is the Father of all things. And this One, Jesus Christ, whom men have seen and handled, tells us of the Father, constantly reveals the Father. But there is another proof of God's existence and nature besides that which Jesus gave during that brief sojourn on earth almost two thousand years ago. We accept every word of revelation concerning Jesus Christ, His person and His mission as it is given in the Word. But there is another history of Him besides that written in the New Testament. During nineteen hundred years Jesus Christ has been writing the history of His power and Godhead in the life of the Church He

founded. He is not an absentee Lord of or in His Church. The last words of Christ, before His ascension, were:

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Jesus still lives for His Church, with His Church, and in His Church. He is still chiding wickedness and hypocrisy in the world; still working for righteousness; still building up His, and His Father’s, Kingdom. His presence may not be seen, but the results of His presence are seen. We cannot reach forth our hands and grasp the tangible hand of Jesus, as did Peter when sinking beneath the waves; but His presence may be felt, and is felt, in the soul-life of all those truly God’s children. Out of our own consciousness of oneness with the Church in her conflicts, victories, and joys; and out of our conscious fellowship with the ever-present, ever-triumphing head of the Church, Christ Jesus, we are able to say, — I believe in God.

What I Believe About God

It is a great thing, the most important initial step in life, to be able to say, honestly and wholeheartedly, — I believe in God. This, as our text indicates, is the primary step. Without this there can be no second step in Christian faith or experience. But faith, to be the right kind of faith, should have a definite content. What do we mean when we say, I believe in God? Have we any clearly defined ideas as to what it is, that we believe concerning God? Undoubtedly, a great many people have really gotten hold of God, and enjoy His blessings, who would have difficulty in defining what it is that they believe about God. The doorway of their spiritual life has been opened, God has come in, and in this way they know Him without knowing any particular theories about Him.

In the intellectual search for God men all soon reach the limit of their power of comprehension. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection” (Job 11:7)? Indeed, we ought to be very careful in our attempts to define God. There are certain things concerning God which He has Himself revealed, beyond these we should not go. And even in the use of the salient points which God has revealed concerning Himself we should be very careful, lest in the use of them we drag

God down to the level of our cramped and cabined intelligence, instead of elevating our intelligence toward the level of His exalted being. The human mind can no more contain God than the dew-drop can contain the sun which, in some little measure, it reflects. But there are some things about God which can be known, and must be known, if our faith, the faith of thinking beings, is to be at all satisfying.

Our text tells us that in addition to believing that God exists, we must believe that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. God is not found by those who are indifferent with respect to Him. And His revelations of Himself, while they come in part in words, come also largely through His operations in the sphere of grace, — through His rewards to those who diligently seek Him. When Jacob wrestled with God he asked of the Lord His name. And the answer was, “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?” And the name was withheld. But it is added, “And God blessed him there.” In that blessing, Jacob and his people gathered more knowledge of the nature of God than they could possibly have gathered from any name. If we will diligently seek, not only to know about God, but God Himself; and seek where the clearest revelations are found, in God’s Word, His final revelation of who and what He is and what He has done and is doing for us; this quest will soon be rewarded, not in this sense that we shall know all there is to be known of God, but in such a way that we shall be led on from knowledge to knowledge, till, finally, we shall know as we are known.

One of the first things we should know is that God is a personal being. He is not a mere aggregate of imposing names. He is not a composite of mere abstractions. God is not mere power; He is a being who exerts power; from whom, as He wills it, limitless power proceeds. God is not a mere thought, nor yet a conglomerate of thoughts; He is a being who thinks. God is not a mere will, some kind of an energy working to bring all things into conformity to itself, or to some definitely purposed end; He is a being, a personality who wills, plans, executes. God is not a mere feeling of generosity, of kindness, of love; He is a being who is beneficent, who loves so truly that it may be called the dominant passion of His life. God is not a mere life-principle; but a personal being from whom proceeds, by the creative energy of His will and Word, all other life. God is a being who can say I, and is conscious that it means to Him what the same expression means to us, with this difference, — God is the absolute, original personal being,

while our personal existence is derived. We are creatures, the work of God's hand.

It does not at all detract from the reality of God's personality that He is a spiritual and not a material being. "God is a Spirit." And those who would know Him must seek Him as a Spirit, in a spiritual way. Even many of the men of science are getting away from the crude idea of former days that the only realities are material things. Men are beginning to see more generally, and more clearly, that the greatest realities are spiritual. The material is but a mode of expressing the spiritual, and to serve as agencies through which those creatures which are partly spiritual, and partly corporeal, as men, may work out their final destiny. God is a pure Spirit — a personal Spirit who thinks, and wills, and loves, and exercises unlimited sovereignty.

God, being one and indivisible as to essence, has but one mind, one will, one heart, one nature; but exists, nevertheless, in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that God the Father is the first person of the Godhead, to whom is rightly ascribed the great work of creation; though the other two persons were also actively engaged. I believe that all things outside of God Himself owe their existence to His creative Word; and that there is a continuous exercise of His creative power put forth for the purpose of preserving, guiding, and controlling that which He created. I believe that this all-wise, all-powerful; this immanent, but still transcendent, God, is truly a Father to me, and all his creatures; that there is a real fatherly feeling in His heart for us, the children of men, who have done so much to grieve Him; and that this fatherly heart conceived and began the execution of the plan for our salvation, as it is written:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

I believe that Jesus Christ is the second person in the family of the Godhead; that He was eternally begotten of the Father, and in the fullness of time became a man for our redemption. I believe that by the active obedience of the life, and the passive obedience of the death, of this God-man every child of Adam's lost race has been redeemed; and that salvation is assured for every one who comes as a needy sinner, and clings to Jesus Christ

by a living, appropriating faith. “He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved” (St. Mark 16:16).

I believe that the Holy Ghost is also truly a person of the triune family of the God-head; and that it is now His particular mission to operate, through the inspired words of Scripture, and the Divinely instituted Sacraments, for the purpose of begetting in the hearts of men a new, a spiritual, life. And that through the same means He continues to work for the restoration in man of the perfect image of God.

There is much more which those who are familiar with God’s holy Word believe. Indeed, we believe all it teaches. But of it all, that which we have stated is the sum of the simple fundamentals. And those who do truly believe these truths are heirs of eternal life and glory. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

6. God The Creator Of All Things

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. — [Gen. 1:1.]

THE SUBJECTS into which the Apostles' Creed leads us are very great, so great that we can follow them only a short distance. Even man, the believer, is himself a creature full of mysteries. He is often given to boasting, as if he knew everything; but in reality there is very much even about himself which he does not know. And when it comes to the subject of God, and the intricacies of His universe, we dwell only on the borderland of the infinite subject. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139:6). With respect to the whole round of God's works, we may well apply the words of the prophet:

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

The first great problem is that of the person and nature of God. That He is, we are absolutely certain. The existence of God is the only satisfactory explanation of the many other things which need explaining. Without God the universe is an insoluble mystery. When would-be wise men seek to explain the universe without God, the necessity is upon them to devise another god, or a number of gods, to take the place of the true God whom they have banished (in their own thoughts only) from His creation. Aside from the revelations, which God has made of Himself in nature and His Word, God has spoken to the hearts of his children. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children God" (Rom. 8:16). We know God as our Father, we know His love, His goodness; however much there may be about Him beyond the present reach of our faculties, this sufficeth.

Another great problem is that of the universe. Some speak of this all but infinite mass of intricately revolving worlds as if they knew all about it. They speak of the things which, as they say, took place millions of years ago as if it were as familiar as yesterday's market report; oblivious of the fact that no two schools today agree as to many of the phenomena of which they treat. The truth of the matter is that the wisest of the wise know only the a, b, c of this wondrous mechanism, the physical universe, and the laws by which it is ruled.

What is the relation between God and the universe? Are we to say that they are one, that the universe is God, that God is the universe? There are those who hold this view, the pantheists; but it is not Biblical; neither is it rational or illuminative, indeed, it is scientifically untenable. Shall we say that there is no relationship between the universe and God, as not a few modern scientists do? This is not Biblical, and it leaves greater mysteries unsolved than does our Christian faith. We accept, unreservedly accept, the Biblical truth formulated in the first article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth." Let us, then, dwell a little further on this article of our faith,

I Believe In God As the Creator of All Things

Only to those void of understanding is this universe lacking in that which awakens the most profound admiration. Everywhere we turn there are wonders piled upon wonders in ordered series like Ossa upon Pelion. Even where all detailed knowledge of the scientific facts of the universe are lacking, the active mind, the alert soul, finds world after world of beauty and mystery on which to feed the imagination, and bow it in admiration and adoration of the Infinite as it has found expression in the finite.

He who, with a good pair of eyes, and a thinking mind, goes out into the twilight of a spring evening, and contemplates the developing transformation of old mother earth, and dwells on the resurrection going on all around in nature, and hears the thousand voices speaking their silent language all about him, to such an one, if he have a sensitive soul, there is borne in an all but crushing sense of the greatness, and mysteriousness of nature, of this earth of ours. But if he lifts his eyes to the starlit heavens, and realizes that this earth, solid and big as it seems, is but a mote which floats through a

space peopled with innumerable worlds; and if, from this teeming universe, he go back and look out into the void, which was the pregnant womb of time, and out of which vacuity there came these teeming systems which form the one complete system; oh, then, — language fails as an adequate vehicle for expressing the overwhelming sense of infinitude borne to the soul by the magnitude and variety and complexity of the universe.

Beholding these very things, Napoleon cried out to his unbelieving generals: “Sirs, who made all that?” This has ever been a question which perturbed men’s minds, and hung heavy upon their hearts. Is all this the result of chance? Is there no designer, no builder, no master mind back of it all? The soul of man has ever revolted at the suggestion. In every age, and every clime, men have walked softly, haunted at least by the suspicion that there was a God hidden in stream and leafy wold. We look at the crumbling temples of ancient Egypt, and they abound with inscriptions which tell of man’s search after God. We visit ancient Athens, and the altar dedicated to the unknown God is a type of what, in some form, may be found in every land, since time began; all of them eloquent in their expression of man’s belief that back of all phenomena is God. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

At the period which marks the beginning of time, God created, brought forth from the absolutely non-existent, the heavens and the earth. None of these things had any previous existence, save in the thought of God. He spoke, and the things spoken took on form and substance as facts of material existence. The fiat words were spoken, and there stretched out the wide spreading plains, and the great deeps, with their finny tribes, and grazing cattle; the mountains reared their heads heavenward, and the streams murmured their way down from the highlands; the superterrestrial beings winged their unfettered way amid the celestial glories, and man walked as the Divinely appointed sovereign of the earth.

This is what we mean by the comprehensive words of the Church’s most ancient creed, “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” This is the work of the Triune God. There is but one creator, as there is but one God; the work of creation being ascribed to the Father because of the order of the persons in the family of the Godhead.

This is the Biblical account of creation. It is God’s own revelation to us. And it is the only account which satisfies the human mind and the human heart. It is a Divine certainty which has become a Christian certitude. It is

not only the first word in a long series of progressive revelations, it is affirmed by the Christ-and Spirit-taught teachers of the New Testament. And next to the doctrine of the person and nature of God Himself this is one of the most fundamental tenets of our Christian faith.

Belief In God As the Maker of All Things Is Not Only Biblical But Rational

We do not mean to say that the Biblical account of creation is rational in the sense of being fully fathomable. It is not. It leaves a number of problems to which no detailed solution is furnished. We mean that the Biblical account of the origin of things is more in harmony with the processes of right thinking than any of the proposed theories which men would substitute for it.

Something must be eternal and self-existent. The Biblical doctrine is that the original, self-existent, eternal reality is spiritual and personal; in other words, God. That God, infinite in all His attributes, should have planned and executed the design of bringing forth such a universe as this, is beyond the reach of our complete comprehension, but it is not contrary to our processes of thinking. But to start out with the postulate that the primal, self-existent, eternal reality was impersonal and material; and then teach that from this impersonal, material something there has evolved this wonderful complexity of worlds, with their never changing laws, but ever changing modes; with all the evidences of design, of adaptation; this is unthinkable, this is absurd.

If there is no creating God, then we have to predicate eternity of mere matter, or say that something came out of nothing without any adequate cause. This would be the greatest of miracles without a miracle worker. If there is no creating God, then impersonal, unthinking matter has evolved a universe so immense, so magnificent, so intricate, so full of blessings that the very highest intellects and most vaulting imaginations of every age have bared and bowed their heads in admiration. This is miracle number two. Some of those who advocate this kind of a theory as to origins try to belittle the Christian's faith. The Christian's faith in God and His creative acts is based primarily on Revelation, but this faith is purest reason in comparison with which the theories of those who would rule God out of His place as the great creative agent is pure credulity.

Suppose a rational being of another order came, from another sphere where they knew of no such things, to one of our modern cities. He would examine the skyscrapers, fitted out with all modern conveniences; he would visit the great manufacturing plants with their shafts and pullies, their ponderous lifts, and belching fires. He would take in, with keen delight, the arteries of traffic of various kinds. He would visit the churches, the schools, the libraries, the art galleries, and the like. And then some one would tell this strange visitant that all these things just happened; that by some strange, unforeseen, inexplicable movement of senseless atoms of dust these things grew. If such things were told a rational creature, he would at once conclude that he was listening to the ravings of a bedlamite.

We have all seen the splendid engine pulling its mile of cars; we have felt its throb and purr as we held the wheel of a car; we have seen it in action as some pilot of the sky performed his gyrations. Suppose these things had come upon us like meteors out of the sky, and some wiseacre had replied, in answer to our excited queries, that these grow of themselves out in the desert where the dust flies thick. We would at once put that man down as an escaped lunatic. We know that things like these do not happen. It takes mind, mind keenly, continuously applied to produce worthy results. It is not otherwise, the history of the ages convinces us, in world-affairs. The Bible teaches us that God created all things. Nature teaches us that if there were no God there ought to be one.

But we have not yet reached quite the pinnacle of self-wrought miracles, the uncaused phenomena, with which we are confronted when God is ruled out of His part in the production of things. Wonders pile upon wonders all around us in the world. Without an adequate primal personal cause of all this everything is thrown into confusion. But the limit is not yet reached. Great as is the credulity required to accept the theory of a self-evolved material universe as wonderful as this in which we live, the complexity is increased a thousand fold when life has to be accounted for. We know that we live, that we have a self-conscious personal existence; we think, we feel, there is a spiritual man that inhabits this physical frame. Whence did life come? Whence came this higher life we find in man? That it came from an original nowhere, from an original nothing, is an absurdity. The only explanation in conformity with right processes of reasoning, which does not stultify, is that of Revelation, — that God created all things.

Our people, especially those who get a smattering of knowledge, and listen to the boastful speech of the neophytes of science, get scared too easily. Let us not forget that there is much disagreement among the advocates of advanced science. And let us not forget that many of the wisest of the scientists have held, and do still hold, that, as to fundamentals, the Biblical account of creation is the most satisfactory, not only to the human heart, but to the human mind as well.

There are some things connected with creation with respect to which we should not presume to be too dogmatic. Such, for instance, is the question as to whether the creative days were solar days, or periods of unknown, but great, length. There are also other related subjects with respect to which the Bible speaks in popular language. We should bear in mind that it is not at all the purpose of the Bible to teach science. But that, on the other hand, there can be no contradiction between the facts, the real facts, of science and the truths of Revelation. And the best of authorities have asserted that disbelief of Old Testament statements is not so much the result of superior knowledge as it is of ignorance.

Indeed, it may be set down as a principle of quite general application that the opposition to the statements of God's Word proceeds from deep-seated unbelief. Those who lead in this propaganda want to get rid of the God of the Bible. Their eyes have been blinded by the god of this world. Others, having been deceived into believing that unproved, and unprovable, hypotheses are indisputable facts, think that fealty to the higher learning demands that they give up the God of creation, forgetful of the fact that the relinquishment of the creative God soon necessitates the surrender of the redeeming God.

Let us hold fast to the old faith that God is the maker of all things. This faith rests on Revelation, but it is supported by the best to which reason can attain. The peers of the brightest intellects this world has produced have been able to rest only in this faith. It is here alone that we can find a firm foundation on which to stand.

The Biblical Conception of the Origin of Things Gives To God True Honor, To Man Proper Dignity and Real Consolation

To what incomprehensible heights, to what unfathomable depths, to what immeasurable distances the inspired record of creation leads us. Each system, which in itself overcomes us with its magnitude, becomes the center of another system, the revolutions of which become to us practical eternities, and the measurements of which run into infinity.

All this only helps to bring into bolder relief the greatness of the almighty Maker of it all. The universe is unspeakably great, but God is immeasurably greater. Does the universe, in the complexity of its harmonies, display evidences of supreme wisdom on the part of its architect and builder? By so much does it honor God, the maker of it all. Does nature exhibit power, wonderful, sometimes appalling power? How strikingly does this tell us of the still greater power of Him who fashioned it! Are we charmed, awed into that which is next to adoration, when we look up into the faces of the countless orbs which scintillate in the autumnal sky? How much more wonderful, and worthy of actual adoration, is the hand which fashioned these countless orbs, lighted them and hung them in the sky to illuminate the night! Is the sun, the mistress of the day, wonderful as she, with unfailing fidelity, keeps her appointed seasons, and sheds forth her warmth and glory on the receptive earth? How much more resplendent must He be who gave existence to the sun, and who is Himself robed in a garment of light by the side of which the brightness of the mid-day sun fades to twilight!

Indeed, all nature is but the vestment in and through which God is expressing Himself; His greatness, wisdom, power and goodness. God Himself should ever be the central fact in all our contemplation of nature. In the calm regularity of the movements of the universe we should ever hear the sounds of God's footsteps. From the glory of the creature we should ever go to the higher glory of the Creator, for whose pleasure they are and were created. From the evidence of the goodness of God as displayed in nature we should go to the goodness of God as revealed in His Word, and certified in the redemption provided for the world.

The Bible record gives to God His place in creation. The tiniest leaf, the great complex whole of the universe, the part and the whole, all reflects the glory of the maker, and bears the unmistakable marks of His handiwork. And each additional step in our knowledge of nature should add just that much more to the reverence with which we contemplate the Maker of it all. How much truer is all this of man, the crown of God's terrestrial workman-

ship. If the flower, with its petals, stamen, and incomparable coloring, glorifies the mind and heart of the infinite artist, how much more does man with his mind and heart and soul capacity? Man is the crown of God's workmanship.

And this Biblical conception of creation is the only one which gives real dignity, or true consolation to the children of men. If man is but an evolved atom, if there was no superior mind controlling the power, and the processes, by which man came to be, if there was no image from without stamped upon him, if there was no original, self-existent, personal being who gave somewhat of His own nature to man, then he is still but a thing of dust. Then the masterly achievements of the human mind, the tender emotions of the human heart, the vaulting aspirations of the human soul, the longing for immortality, these are all but the unexplainable fatuous dreams of a bundle of atoms in fortuitous concourse. Then this vitalized mechanism of human life, the world's greatest unsolved puzzle, when it has run down, and worn out, and the magic bond of unity is severed, returns to the sphere of non-vitalized dust. Then there is no future for man. All our hopes are vain. Then what is left of worth? What to comfort?

The Biblical record of the beginning of things gives us another picture. Man did not come to be without a maker. God is his maker. God breathed into man, out of the fullness of His own abundant life, the breath of life. He made him in His own image. He gave him of His own deathless nature. God gave to man, so far as his own nature is concerned, a perfect measure of wisdom and power; the wisdom to think God's thoughts after Him, the power to be a worker together with Him, a creature fit to be forever a sharer of the Creator's destiny.

Man occupies the central place in God's creation. According to Revelation, the purpose of creation is, first of all, to manifest the perfections of God, and thus to glorify Him; in the second place, it is for man's use, the sphere in which he is to work out his destiny. "The earth hath He given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:7).

Even the celestial spirits themselves have, as at least part of their mission, a ministry to man. "Are they not ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). The better the understanding we get, therefore, of the universe the clearer should become our conception of the worth God has given to us, and of the exalted position He intended us to occupy in creation.

Look up, ye faltering children of men, take heart, “For all things are yours; whether... life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1 Cor. 3:21—22). But this glorious heritage can be ours in reality only when we hold fast to God’s own revealed truth, as we have been taught to confess it from our earliest years, — “I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

7. The Angels

To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. — [Heb. 1:13, 14.]

In the first article of the Creed we say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” This is a comprehensive statement. The words “heaven and earth” include all creation. The Word of God teaches, and we believe, that every creature, animate and inanimate, was brought into being by God, the unmade maker of all things. “By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

In the explanation of the first article, as you will remember, the emphasis is put on the creation of man. This explanation starts out with the statement, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them.” This is correct from the viewpoint of a confession, which the Creed is. Man is here telling forth what God is to him, and what he understands that God has done especially for him, and each of his brethren of mankind.

Rightly understood, man can scarcely have too high an opinion of himself. He is now a poor sin-poisoned, corroded, deformed shadow of what he was intended to be, of what he was originally. But Christ gives us to understand that one human soul is worth more than the whole material world. Far as man has fallen, badly as he is deformed, he still retains his original essential nature. And not to appreciate it highly is to depreciate the magnitude and cost of Christ’s work for our restoration.

In our Catechism “angels and mankind” are classed together as the chief of God’s creatures. The form of the creed, and the call for self-expression it presents, necessitated, in former addresses, a somewhat extended treatment

of man, his nature and relationship to the Creator, actual and possible. In view of this, the general treatment given the subject of creation in the preceding address might have been made to suffice. But there is a subject contained in it of such importance, and, to many people, of such entrancing interest, that we may well pause to give it special consideration. It is the doctrine of the angels, their nature, and their ministry.

The Nature of the Angels

The angels are spoken of in the Scriptures frequently and familiarly, but not to any great extent by way of explanation. The existence and the ministries of angels are spoken of as indisputable facts, but very little detailed information is given as to their creation, nature, rank, and the like.

In spite of the frequency with which the inspired writers speak of angels, in the face of the fact that the sacred record assigns to them a very important part in carrying out God's plans, and a close relationship to man's affairs, we hear but little of them in modern Christian literature. In a modern dogmatic treatise of another church, I find not a single reference to the existence or nature of the angels. In another twenty volume treatment of the leading truths of the Bible, I have looked in vain for a single, direct, explicit treatment, from any point of view, of the subject of angels. The modern mind, with its materialistic tendencies, especially where dominated by the scientific spirit of the age, seems inclined to class the Biblical doctrine of angels along with the myths and fairy tales of earlier ages. But this is, after all, not an exclusively modern attitude of mind. In the days of Christ there were those who denied the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). These Sadducees of the ancient and modern world no doubt consider belief in angels as fit only for children, and those like children who live largely in the realm of the imagination; but not worthy the serious consideration of mature minds. As for me, I pray that the Lord will ever preserve me from becoming so worldly-wise, so prosaic, so dead to conceptions of a world of life of a purely spiritual order, so unbelieving with respect to the plainest teachings of God's Word, that I shall no longer find interest, comfort, strength, mind and soul expansion, in contemplation of the subject of angels, their nearness, their interest and cooperation in our human affairs.

That there are intelligent and powerful creatures higher than man has always been the belief of a large part of humanity. It is in such perfect accord with what we find elsewhere in the realm of nature as to be in the highest degree probable, apart from the positive declarations of Scripture. Below man in the sphere of living creatures we find a long series. And there is a gradation from the lowest to the highly developed. So far as the creatures of earth are concerned, man stands in a class by himself. He is the climax of the visible creation. That he should stand thus isolated, with no kindred nearer than the animals around him seems highly improbable from what we know of God's workmanship in other spheres. The distance of God above man naturally inclines the mind to the belief that this distance is filled by other intelligences of a somewhat higher order and different nature than man. And this supposition is fully verified in Scripture. These creatures are the angels.

In our study of the nature of the angels, and their place in God's great universe, there is much with respect to which we will always have to be satisfied to say, I do not know. There is no source from which to gain the knowledge. Nature gives us no known basis for investigation. And God, with respect to not a few points, has not spoken. We must, therefore, be satisfied with what has been revealed, and not be guilty of a prying, if not a profane, curiosity.

The angels, according to God's Word, are not mere temporary manifestations of certain Divine powers. It is probable that God Himself, especially the pre-incarnate Son, has at times appeared on earth in the form of an angel. But this was only occasional. The angels are not mere influences set in operation by God. The Word of God teaches us very clearly that the angels are real beings, having, each of them, a separate personal existence. This is shown by the names given to them, and by the works performed by them. But in thinking of the angels we must get away from all material modes of thinking. The angels, as our text tells us, are spiritual personalities. They have no material bodies at all, though they have often assumed a bodily form for the purpose of better impressing mankind, or to facilitate intercourse with them.

The Angels Are Created Beings

This is definitely settled by the inspired statement of the Apostle, "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16). The angels did not spring forth spontaneously. They are not of the substance of God. They are creatures formed by God. The time of their creation is nowhere definitely stated. But from statements of God concerning His creative work, it is generally concluded that they were given existence some time during the period of active creative work which witnessed the genesis of all other creatures. And there is at least an intimation in the first part of the thirty-eighth chapter of Job that the angels were created some time before man. It says that the sons of God shouted for joy at the progress of God's creative work, and the inference is that man had not yet been given his being when this took place.

The declaration of the inspired spokesman, who tells of the satisfaction of the Almighty as He beheld the results of His creative energy, is:

"And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.

This unquestionably applies to the angelic beings. They were pure, holy, perfect spiritual beings. In comparison with man, superior (Ps. 8:5); in relation to God reverent and obedient (Isa. 6:2, 3). They form a mighty host encircling the throne of the Most High, reflecting back His glory on Himself. But, as was the case with man, these purely spiritual beings, endowed with the ability perfectly to do the holy will of God, enjoyed a liberty which it was possible for them to abuse. And some of them, at a time not definitely known to us, but before the fall of man, did abuse this liberty. There was an apostasy, a fall, in the ranks of these heavenly creatures. Pride came, and with it rebellion, and final loss of all that was bright, and pure, and blessed. And now there are two great armies of spiritual beings in perpetual conflict; the one still in the service of God, the other opposed to Him and all His plans.

It is clear from the teaching of Scripture that the angels, both good and bad, are of different ranks; the good angels ascending, rank upon rank, as they approach, but never reach, the ineffable glory and power of the Lord of all. At the head of the fallen, but crafty and still powerful, hosts of evil spirits stands the prince of the powers of darkness, Satan, the arch enemy and seducer of mankind. Under him, subservient to and animated by his dominant will, there descends rank after rank of lesser spirits; all united, how-

ever, by the one unalterable spirit of enmity against God, and the determination to injure His handiwork, especially man, His best beloved.

The power of the angels, both good and bad, is very great. We have, probably, only the faintest conception of its extent. This is clear from the names given them, and the operations ascribed to them. Recall the exhortation in Ephesians, chapter six. After urging the children of God to “put on the whole armor of God,” the Apostle tells why, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.” The child of God may well tremble, and lose all false self-confidence, when he thinks of the hosts which constantly surround him, seeking his hurt. But to offset this is the assurance that the good angels are still more numerous and powerful, and that back of them, supporting them, is God Himself. And the good angels are as much interested in our welfare as the spirits of darkness are in securing our hurt.

Let us not forget that the power of all these spirit beings is limited. Theirs is not an original and unlimited, but a derived and circumscribed power. They can do only that which God commands or allows. If we are God’s children we have the assurance not only of being effectually shielded against any ultimate harm the evil spirits might wish to do us; but of having thrown around us the sheltering, protecting care of God’s army of angel warriors, all eager to defend us.

It will help us better to understand and appreciate the next division of our subject to remember that though the angels of light possess a knowledge and power far in advance of anything which man now possesses, yet, in certain respects, we, the children of men, stand in a closer relationship to God, through Christ, than do the angels. Jesus Christ, when He came to earth, took not on Him the nature of angels, but of man (Heb. 2:16). The angels are witnesses of the Divine glory, and only in an indirect way sharers of it. The only begotten Son of God has taken on Himself our nature, and with it entered into heaven. And through that nature we are capable of entering into closest union and fellowship with God. Another evidence of this closer relationship to Him is the fact that in the great day of Judgment, when all God’s creatures shall have proclaimed to them the decision as to their eternal destiny, man shall, in some way, have part in proclaiming sentence on the very angels. “Know ye not that ye shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3).

The Ministry of the Angels

The ministries of the angels is a subject which appeals strongly to the nobler sensibilities of our nature. And fortunately, to our great comfort, the fact, and in part the nature, of these ministries are not left to the flights of our imagination; they are verified in the history of God's people, they are set forth on the pages of God's Word. All parts of the Scriptures contain these records, but the third Gospel might not inappropriately be called the book of the angels. It gives us the realization of that most beautiful of Hebrew stories, that of "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

The name angel itself is not descriptive of the nature of these heavenly beings, but of the activity by which they are distinguished. The word angel means a messenger. The Scriptures abundantly show that God has frequently so employed the angels of His presence, and unquestionably still so employs them. The angels may be described from this point of view as intermediate existences between God and man, one of whose chief functions is to be mediating agents between the spiritual and physical worlds, between God and man.

In how many instances the angels of God are mentioned in the Scriptures as the agents for carrying out His plans for the good of the children of men. We are told of their appearance to Jacob, of the deliverance they wrought for Lot, and Daniel, the three Hebrew youths, and Peter; they led Joseph and Mary to Egypt, Philip to the eunuch, and Cornelius to Peter; they were the instructors of Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, David, Elijah, Zachariah, Mary, and the Apostles.

What the angels have done for individuals they have often done for nations. When the chosen people were to be delivered from their galling bondage, the angels were their heaven-sent assistants. When the Law was given they were present to do the Lord's bidding in the service of man. They accompanied God's people on their way, helped them when assaulted, encamped round about them as a defense in times of danger.

When we come to the New Testament, the testimony to angel activity in man's behalf is still more fully and definitely set forth. They foretold and celebrated the birth of Jesus. As a child they led Him out of harm's way by warning his parents. In the ordeal of His temptation they were near at hand,

and ministered to His necessities when it was at an end. In the awful agony of Gethsemane they were His unseen companions, and by one of them He was succored in His extremity. They announced His resurrection. They came to comfort his disciples after His ascension. And they shall form His court of ministering servants when He comes again to Judgment. And the evidence is abundant that the angels are just as active in our behalf.

It is a dangerous thing to forget, however, that the evil spirits are also actively engaged with the affairs of men; but to harm, to destroy. The influence of Satan, and his kindred host of perverted spirits is very real, and powerful. You remember how, in those awful last hours, Jesus turned to Simon Peter and said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Jesus recognized better than we do the dangers threatening from this source. Many of our ills are unquestionably directly due to their malevolent activity. This activity is not merely occasional, it is often a constant pressure. And many are the times, even when we are engaged in the most holy service, that the most incongruous thoughts and desires suggest themselves. How do we account for it, not alone by psychological processes; it is some imp of darkness insinuating these thoughts and desires into our minds and hearts. And we need constantly to be on our guard, just as the Apostle, who needed Christ's warning and help, urges: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). For our comfort, let us remember that these malignant spirits are not all-powerful. They have their limits set, and even where they are permitted to exert themselves God keeps His hand upon their activities, and overrules it for the good of his faithful ones. The activities of the evil spirits all the more enlist the activities of our protecting angels.

What a wonderfully encouraging, sustaining thought this of our text is,

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

About the details of angel life we do not know a great deal. And it is well not to be unduly inquisitive about these things. The best things, the helpful things, it is given us to know. The Word tells us that we are directed and assisted, those who want it, over the difficult places in life's pathway by the

angels of heaven. We do not know when, or how, they come, or when they go. We cannot explain the relationship of these heavenly beings to our earthly toil and discipline; but it is very real and powerful.

Many is the time we have felt an unexplainable influence, a prompting toward that which is good, a feeling of revulsion against that which is evil. It may have been the working in us of some half-forgotten divine truth, it may have been the touch of the Spirit through such truth; it may have been, it doubtless often was, the influence of these unseen heavenly ministrants pointing the way for us; touching with spirit fingers the responsive chords of our souls. This is not a vain dream. It is not a flight of an excited imagination. It is the calm teaching of God's Word. It is the experience of human souls attuned to catch and register Divine movements in the spiritual world. We have heard voices speaking to our souls, not through the medium of the outer ear; we have felt impalpable hands resting on us, either in restraint or urgency. Who will say that this was not the work of God, through some angel sent from His throne?

The thought of guardian angels is a fascinating and encouraging one. There are indications in God's Word that Israel as a kingdom, and at least certain cities, enjoyed the special guardianship of certain angels. Of still more direct, personal interest is the question of angelic guardianship for individuals. And there is considerable ground for believing this, especially with respect to the children. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. 18:10). Does not this passage say that the little ones do have among the radiant spirits which surround the throne on high certain ones whose particular mission it is to watch over them? It does not, however, say that each child has its own particular guardian angel, though this is by no means precluded.

If we older people do not have guardian angels in the sense that some particular one, or ones, have been assigned as our special helpers, we assuredly have what amounts to the same thing; there are angels sent to serve our needs, and minister to us God's richly provided blessings. Daniel was able to say, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouth, that they have not hurt me" (Dan. 6:22). And David assures us that God shall give his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways; to uphold us in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone (Ps. 91:11—12). And you and I have had many gracious deliverances, and many blessings be-

stowed by the hands of these same heavenly ministers. Old Spenser was writing fact, not fiction, when he sang:

“How oft do they their silvery bowers leave,
And come to succor us who succor need?
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends, to aid us militant?
They for us fight, they watch, and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love, and nothing for reward!
Oh, why should heavenly God to men have such regard!”

And when the evening of life has come, and we say farewell to the things of earth, God sends a convoy of His angels to bear our ransomed spirits home. It is not a mere work of imagination that Kaulbach has depicted in his “The Angel of Peace” bearing the child to its heavenly home. Did not God send his angels to bear the soul of Lazarus to heaven?

There are not many subjects in God’s Word more charming and restful than a study of angelology. It fascinates and stimulates the imagination. It strengthens and comforts us. It is a subject, like all kindred ones, entirely too big to be fully grasped by us; but we should be very much poorer without what we do know. And all the materialism that operates to drive these solemnizing and ennobling thoughts out of our lives is the worst foe to our best education.

The closing part of one of the prayers of our early youth is still often our prayer, “Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.”

8. God's Providence

Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, and Thou preservest them all. — [Neh. 9:6.]

Come and see the works of God... He ruleth by His power forever; His eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves. — [Ps. 66:5, 7.]

WE HAVE GIVEN SOME THOUGHT to the wonders of creation. We believe the teaching of Scripture that the existence of all things is due to a creative act, or a series of creative acts, of almighty God. But the thoughtful person has not gotten rid of all difficulties when he has settled for himself the great question of the beginning of things. We recognize that we are living in, are, indeed, a part of, a wonderfully intricate universe. Everywhere there are laws, forces, operating. Everywhere continual changes are going on. But with all the change there is regularity, perpetuity, and identity discernible in creation. In all this we have a second wonder little, if any, less remarkable and mysterious than that of the origin of things itself.

How shall we account for the continued orderly, active existence of all things? There are mysteries here which no reach of human mind can approach and solve. Sir William Hamilton says, "A God that man could understand would be no God. And a world that man could understand would be a toy." What is this but another way of repeating the prophet's words, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." But in this, as in all other things good for us to know, we are not left in the dark as to the needful essentials. Nature gives us some hints as to the solution of the problem. And many minds on which the light of Revelation never shone have come to the logical conclusion that only the same infinite Power which brought forth this world could keep it, and produce the results with which we are ac-

quainted. Revelation confirms this. It tells us that God the creator is also the keeper and ruler of that which He created.

The continuous exertion of almighty power by which God keeps in regular working order the things He created is set forth in various terms in the holy Scriptures. In the language of the Church, we usually call this Divine presence in nature, and control over it, by the name of Providence. In this term Providence two thoughts are included neither of which dare be overlooked, nor yet confounded. They are these, God preserves the world He created, and He governs it. Accordingly, we will take as our subject the profound, but comforting, truth that God preserves and governs His world.

This Is God's World and He Preserves It

One of the truths we all need to learn more fully, more realistically, is that this is God's world. In theory all Christians hold this to be true, but it is not as living a faith as it ought to be. It does not affect our lives, our conduct, as vitally as it should. In fact, we associate God with this world and its affairs but little more, probably in many instances not as much, as we do the architect and the house for which, ten or twenty years ago, he drew the plans, and supervised the construction. Like St. Paul and Luther we need to learn to see God more clearly everywhere in His world. He is still the owner of it. His autograph is written all over it. He still keeps it by the constant going forth into all its parts of His almightiness.

There is an usurper in God's universe. And just as a false claimant for one of the thrones of earth brings confusion and suffering, so does the usurper in God's world bring confusion and suffering. This note of discord, the friction, suffering, and death resultant therefrom, is found in every sphere of which we have any knowledge. It is found in the world of matter; it is found in man, and affects him in body and soul. But these things do not belong to Satan. He claims them. He offered to give them all to Christ if He would serve him. But this was but one of the numerous progeny of lies of which he is the father. This world, in the most emphatic and absolute sense, belongs to God.

And God has His world in charge. There are those who exalt the laws of nature into deities. Others would not dethrone God, or rob Him of the honor of creating all things; but believe that He originally established the laws

regulating all creatures, and impressed on these laws so permanently their character and operative force, that it is no longer necessary for Him to interfere in the affairs of the world. That this view is not Biblical need not be told those who know their Bibles. God did not only originally create things, but to His sustaining hand all things owe their continued existence. God is just as truly and vitally connected with the preservation of the world as He was with its production.

As St. Augustine said a millennium and a half ago, God is not a workman who completed His work, and then turned it over to some one else. Much less did He turn it over to an impersonal, irrational, mechanical force. God is not an absentee landlord. He is not a mere spectator of the universe He brought forth. By a continuous exercise of His omnipotent will, by a steady giving forth of His almighty power, God sustains what He once brought forth. St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, after telling them, in chapter one, that Christ was the image of the invisible God, the creator of all things, says: "And by Him all things consist," that is, hold together, or continue in being.

What do men gain in an intellectual way but confusion by taking away God from their thoughts of the world's preservation? They have to make law, which they spell with a capital "L," equivalent to the Biblical conception of God, which bemuddles the mind, for, outside of God, law has no personality, no intelligence, no faculty for self-direction. We avoid all these befuddling subterfuges of unbelief, or of self-vaunting reason, when we follow the teaching of Jesus, and account for the world, both as to its creation and preservation, by ascribing it directly to God's own personal activity.

All things great and small outside of God Himself are creatures. Creatures have no independent existence. They are not self-originated. They have no power within of self-sustentation. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Without God there could be no life, without Him no life can continue. Without God no stalk of grass could grow, no flower bloom. We speak of our human volitions, of our doing this or that, or refusing to do this or that, because we willed to do, or not to do, certain things. We have the power to will, and within certain limits, to execute our volitions; but without God's presence, and the constant operation of God's sustaining power we could not take a step, raise a hand, or draw a breath. And that which is true of man is true of all creatures. God clothes the grass, it is said; He gives it its form and fashion; He paints the rose, and puts the

perfume in the arbutus. God does not only preserve the earth as a whole, but each part of it; just as He created the whole by creating the separate parts. Supercilious human wisdom smiles disdainfully at such a faith as this, but it is what God Himself teaches; and we, with childlike simplicity, accept it.

What a different conception men generally would have of God, what a different relationship they would sustain to Him, if, instead of thinking of God as a King enthroned in some far off unknown sphere, or as One who occasionally draws near to his people, at times of public service, for instance, or in seasons of dire distress, they lived in the consciousness of God's abiding presence, and recognized the working of His power in all things. Luther said, the world is full of God. In the alternation of day and night, in the procession of the seasons, in the trees laden with fruit, in the fields waving with golden grain, in storm and sunshine, we ought to see the operation, not of a blind, unfeeling force; but of a force which is the outgoing of the wisely and lovingly directed will of Almighty God. How differently most of us would feel and act if we realized this nearness of the Divine, and that His movements were directed to us personally. Rightly realized, this would make our labor a continual benediction from the hand of God, our suffering would partake of the nature of a sacrifice, and the eating of our daily bread would be almost sacramental.

This Is God's World and He Governs It

God does not only preserve His creation so that it continues to exist and perform its preordained functions, but He is still present with creation. He has oversight of it, and so controls it that there is a constant gradual unfolding of His plans, and a constant accomplishment of His will. Indeed, so intimate, so real, is God's administration of the world He has created that it may be appropriately called a continuation of His creative work. This administration of affairs extends from the movements of the spheres to the growth of the grass and the painting of the lily; from world government, and the plan of redemption to counting the tears which fall from the eyes of His afflicted. Jerome was wholly at fault when he taught that God's greatness precluded His participation in the, so-called, smaller affairs of the world.

The personal administration of God's affairs is generally considered under the head of general providence, or world-government; and special providence, or the care of his children. It is of the former that we shall here specially treat.

The subject of world-government is a great one, incomprehensibly great. Why, is it not a fact that men, who spend their lives at the task, cannot fully straighten out, and gather up, the loosened ends of the tangled skein of mere human government? There are currents of influence which can be read with approximate correctness only in the light of history. There is always great diversity of opinion among men as to which set of governmental principles will bring the greatest returns in the form of prosperity and happiness to the subjects for whom they are to be administered. What shall we think, then, of that government which includes all governments? which has to do with the control of the myriad spheres which people infinite space? of that government which is the higher law which controls the rise and fall of human empires, and the material well-being of nations? but is concerned also, and concerned especially, with the moral and spiritual forces of the universe?

To add to the complexity of the Divine government, we must bear in mind the problem of human freedom, and the further fact that there is a far-reaching, mighty kingdom the object of which is the defeat of God's government. And these varied lines of influence, so diverse in their nature, so conflicting in their objects, are surging back and forth in alternating success and failure; but God gathers up the reins, and so controls and overrules them that, at every stage of the conflict, His honor is being vindicated, and His will done. Men are able but imperfectly to see a very small segment of the cycle of events which we call history; but with God a thousand years are as but a day, and He sees that every step in world-affairs is a step toward the ultimate goal He has set.

This is a subject so great that its serious contemplation staggers the human mind. But, fortunately, we are not required fully to comprehend it, only to believe it. The only point which it is essential for our peace of mind, our rest of heart, to grasp is this that God is wholly in charge of His universe; that He has not forsaken it, or us. He who speaks of mere chance or accident blasphemes God. He who knows only the rule of blind, impersonal force has made for himself a god that has no real existence. There are forces at work which we call laws, but they are not self-originated, there is no power within them for self-perpetuation, they are not independently opera-

tive; these laws are but the unvarying operation of forces going forth perpetually from the inexhaustible reservoir of God's own personal power.

All this rests on the firm foundation of God's revealed truth. "By Him all things consist" (Col. 1:7). If God should, for one moment, withdraw His sustaining hand, the nice adjustments which are the marvels of science; the sustaining and moving forces which are the admiration and dream of the philosophic mind; the beneficent arrangements of a kindly productive nature which give us our sustenance, would all fall into chaos; for God "upholdeth all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:13).

God's providence, His control of affairs, extends to what we are prone to consider the every day results of natural conditions. The Divine Master tells us with His own lips that it is our Father who is in Heaven that maketh his sun to shine, and the rain to fall (St. Matt. 5:45). And again, that it is He who giveth form and fashion to the springing grass which perisheth in a day (St. Matt. 6:26). Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, are the gifts of God's hand.

The comforting, heartening, part of all this is that we are assured that all these things, the least together with the greatest, form but the setting, are God's personally controlled agencies, for carrying out His still higher and final plans for the good of the special objects of His concern, the children of His love — mankind. All things are ours. The heavenly bodies move for us. The sun shines for us. The rain falls for us. The earth was made fruitful for us.

God shall continue to govern thus, suffering some to walk, for a time, in their own ways; overruling a sin-cursed earth, till all enemies are put forever beneath His feet, and His complete sovereignty vindicated, and He, the eternal God, shall be all and in all. Then, around His throne shall be gathered, eternally to praise Him, those who have here learned to know His name, own His power, and adore His grace; and forever it will be given them to enjoy the fruits of the beneficent reign of Him who is the "King of nations" (Jer. 10:7).

9. The Problem Of Evil

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.... [Rev. 12:7—9.]

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chain under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. — [Jude 6.]

THERE IS A PROBLEM, not mentioned in the brief statements of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, but which presents itself to every serious thinker on the truths therein contained. And it is expressed, in summary manner, in Luther's explanation of the First Article:

“He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil.”

If God created all things, if He created all things good, very good, as He Himself could declare, then, at once the thought occurs to us, things are not as they once were. Things are no longer wholly good. Everything is now tainted, everything is now out of joint. Where good exists it is opposed. If good is to make progress there must be a continued warfare for it.

The question close at hand, whenever we ponder this problem, is that respecting the origin of evil. God is good. What He created was perfect in its goodness. Then where did evil come from? How could it originate? Let us make a study of this subject, going, as we ever do, to the one authentic source of information, — God's holy Word. We shall consider some of the more fundamental points having to do with the great problem of evil.

The Origin of Evil

The origin of evil is a problem all men have pondered. The heathen nations, from earliest times, were forced to recognize the presence of a destructive power, and tried to account for its origin, and continued activity. Their efforts, naturally, were not satisfactory. The theory most plausible to them was that of dualism, the doctrine that there are two rival powers, a good and an evil, in perpetual struggle for the control of the world. Some of them held that the material world was the product of the energy of the evil power. But their conclusions did little either to enlighten the minds, or comfort the hearts, of the children of men.

Indeed, the problem of evil, its origin, its continued existence, and operation, considered from any point of view, is one of the most perplexing with which the mind of man is called to deal. It puzzles the finest spirits of the race. Many have been brought by it to silent despair. Some have been driven to unbelief. And multitudes have clung to their faith only by forcing reason to sit unquestioning in the presence of the mystery it can neither penetrate nor explain.

Is it not true that the Christian, who believes in the Heavenly Father's wisdom, and power, and loving-kindness, has the most difficult problem of all on his hands when it comes to considering the problem of evil? If the doctrine of the materialist were true, if things were ruled by mechanical necessity, if the fate of all things was eternally and inevitably fixed, then we would be spared, in some measure at least, the burdens of conscience, the pangs of heart, the perplexities of reason, which must of necessity come to the one who believes in the sovereignty of a God infinite in power, and wisdom, and goodness; and who wills the happiness of his children.

And the very core of the problem of evil, that which most puzzles the mind and wrings the heart of the child of God, is moral evil. Crimes abound, vice spreads like a contagion, lust burns like a fire in the blood; these things bring suffering, they destroy that which is most godlike in men.

Give imagination rein for a moment. Think of the wasted manhood of the world. Think of the races sunk in savagery, the peoples who have lived their little day, played their little part on the stage of hardly human activity, and died scarcely men. Think of the other multitudes, in lands more favored, who have been little more than the causes, or the instruments, or the victims of evil. Think of the tragedies in human life, the diseases, the suffering, the wretchedness, the withered hearts, the dwarfed intellects, the parched souls, which have resulted from the operative presence of evil; an

evil which goes on perpetuating and multiplying itself. Think of all this taking place in the lives of those created good, and destined for glory, and who ought to be on their way to eternal bliss. This is, indeed, a thought too painful for one to dwell upon for any length of time. In contemplation of it the heart grows sick, and reason rebels.

All that we can do is to go to the word of Revelation, and focus the light there shed on the problem of evil. Even this light leaves not a few shadows into which human mind finds no way of penetrating, but it does not fail to give us much of comfort. It assures us that there is a path of safety through the labyrinth, and a haven of rest where evil can no longer touch or harm.

The origin of evil was on this wise. God created everything perfect. The angels were glorious beings who stood very close to God, sharers of His glory, the executors of His will. But to be confirmed in their goodness and glory they had, personally, to make choice of that goodness and power for themselves. Virtue is virtue only when it is the free choice of one who could choose the opposite. When there is the power of choosing the good there must exist the possibility of choosing the evil. Where this is not true we have a mere machine, not a rational, volitional being.

Evil was conceived and brought to birth from the inner life of one of the angels of light. There was nothing without to suggest it. There was no lack of sustaining grace. But from within there was a reaching out after imaginary blessings, the attributes and prerogatives which belong to God alone. The creature rebelled against being a creature, though the most blessed. He wanted to be God. To this inner suggestion one of the princes of heaven yielded, and succeeded in leading many others astray. As a result, they all (the rebels) lost their perfection. Their holiness, their purity was gone. Their knowledge was greatly contracted, their power diminished. Their freedom of will was lost, so that henceforth they could only choose evil. Thus these sons of light, God's own nearest children, became irreclaimably rebellious, were cast out of heaven into an existence of darkness and misery. This was the origin of evil.

Evil, then, is not a separate living entity existing in and by itself. There was no original nature of wickedness. Evil is the corruption, the perversion, of that which was good. Evil exists in the nature of personal beings fallen from their original estate. Evil is the condition of ethical creatures who have turned from virtue to vice, from love to hate, from the love and pursuit of truth to falsehood, from liberty to bondage.

Evil did not originate in the earth. It was introduced among the children of men from without. Our first parents were part of God's perfect creation. But they, too, being moral creatures, were endowed with the power of choice. They could remain permanently good only by choosing the good. The opportunity for choice soon came. The difference between the temptation of the heavenly creatures and our first parents was that with the former it came from within, on the part of our first parents it came from without, — the leader of the fallen host of heaven acting as the tempter.

Another great difference between the fall in heaven, and the fall on earth is that when the angels sinned they fell, it seems, beyond the possibility of being reclaimed. Man, having fallen by seduction, is given a chance for rehabilitation. God wills his restoration. He has made all necessary plans, and provided all necessary means, for its accomplishment. There is much in man that makes the process of restoration difficult. And the devil opposes it with all his cunning and power.

The Conflict With Evil

The results of the introduction of evil into creation are felt everywhere. Even the physical world has become a sufferer because of sin. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22). There is a conflict going on everywhere. There are storms, earthquakes, tidal waves, and devastating fires. Some mock, and say, these things are but the inevitable result of the operation of natural laws. There are such laws, but we are simple enough to believe that things would not be as they are were it not for sin.

That there is a conflict being waged in the lives of men universally needs no argument. It is a fact of everyday experience. And we have in mind not alone the hellish conflagrations of hate and murder which break out periodically, and gather with insatiable maw the flower of earth's manhood, and blight earth's womanhood. In its entirety, more trying, more pitiable still, is the treadmill grind, the never-ending pull of evil. This is the conflict of the ages. This is the summation of the tragedies of life.

This conflict was sketched in broad outline immediately after the catastrophe in Eden. The words contain a precious promise, the first Gospel message to a fallen world; but at the same time it makes a statement, the work-

ing out of which has hung like a pall over all humanity. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The seed of the woman is Christ, who was to break Satan's power, while Satan was to bruise His heel. The bruising of the heel may seem a minor matter. But it means the weakening of power, the lessening of speed, the being overtaken by the enemy, and grappling with him under disadvantages. Just think of what the bruising of the heel meant to Jesus. It meant the wilderness temptation, Gethsemane, and Calvary; and who knows how much that was practically just as trying all the way between. And Christ's life-long passion was but an accentuation of what we, according to our measure of strength, have to endure.

We have become so accustomed to the disturbed, distorted, perverted condition of things on earth that they no longer affect us as they should. Our senses have become dulled by the pain. But if we sit down and think soberly of the condition of things in the light of heaven as it may be caught by renewed natures, we are still appalled. All around us we find never-ceasing wrangling, endless distractions, irreconcilable differences, disquieting thoughts, discouraging prospects, unaccountable delusions, bitter animosities and cruel strifes. We see about us demoniac hate struggling with immortal love for the mastery of men's souls. We are conscious of impoverishment, and that peril stalks near at hand, filling our souls with dark fears, and weakening doubts. On the other hand, we are conscious of something brooding over us, bidding us be of good courage, filling us with fair hopes and fond anticipations. We are conscious of the presence and operation of two powers, one of which would ruthlessly plunge us into the depths of endless night, another which would lead us into empyrean heights where reigns eternal day.

And then there is the bitter, biting cup of physical suffering. In some form it comes to all of us. It comes in the line of business, our possessions take wings and disappear. It comes in the form of bodily pain, and vanished strength. It comes in the form of anguish of mind and spirit. It comes in the form of a thief, snatching away our loved ones, leaving the homes once cheery and full of life empty and silent. And to add to our perplexity, it not infrequently seems as if the wicked were the ones to whom it is given most to flourish, while on the good adversity descends in showers.

Even on the part of the renewed of men there is not only this conflict with the evil which assails from without, and the consequent suffering of

mind and body; but the conflict is still waged from within. We have learned to loathe the creed of the sensualist, and detest the mark of the beast, which so many wear on their brow as the mark of Cain; we scorn the principles, or lack of principle, which bring the dark-browed felon to his cell of shame; there is something in us which recoils from those base passions which convulse and distort human lives; but in spite of all this there is a conflict, a ceaseless conflict waged within. In spite of that in us which loathes the evil, and yearns for the good; in spite of our wrestling in prayer, our resolving and reresolving, we are often caught in the clutches of the power which carries us off our feet, and bends us to the thing we hate; and even when we do the good, we are conscious of the failure to realize the full measure of our own ideal. And, oh, the pain of it all. How many have been constrained to cry out: O Lord, it is more than I can bear. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me."

The Conquest Over Evil

Let us turn from the perplexing thought about the origin of evil, and from the depressing thought of the age-long conflict with evil, to contemplate the triumph over evil.

Is there any real ground for speaking of a conquest over evil? There are those who seriously question whether there have been any such real conquests, and are pessimistic as to whether there ever will be. Others, at times, at least, pretend to believe that we have entered, or are about to enter, millennial days; that goodness is all but supreme, and evil scarcely more than a shadow to heighten the beauty of the picture. Both are wrong. In this world, and while the present order continues, the good will never be unmolested, never fully triumphant. It will ever have to struggle for every inch of ground it gains. But evil is never going to fully and finally triumph. The good, all that is of God, is going finally to fully and eternally triumph.

Indeed, we must not overlook, what only ignorance, or incurable pessimism, can overlook, that great, far-reaching, victories have already been won in this world over evil. This is asserted by Revelation, it is corroborated by history. Innumerable thousands of human lives have been transformed, not a few of them being lifted out of the very pits of pollution. Nations have been transformed. Beneficent institutions have had a wonderful

development. Many untoward conditions have been ameliorated. Conflagrations of hellish rapine and murder still occasionally break out; and enough of sordidness everywhere abounds, to teach the world, and a vacillating Church, that wickedness still inheres in all men's hearts, and that the substitutes they would so often put in place of God's quickening Word, regeneration, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, will never be able to preserve the world from destruction. But all in all, and in many directions, the kingdom of God has been winning great victories, and will continue to win them.

Let us not forget that the first real victory over the power of evil among men was won by that great representative man, the God-man, Christ our Savior. The very purpose for which He came into the world, as the incarnate Son of God, was to meet the great arch-enemy of mankind, the one in whose seared breast dwells the fountainhead of the torrential stream of all evil, and break his power over humanity. And He fully accomplished His purpose. The great battle between the Prince of light and life, and the prince of darkness and death has been fought. It waged for three trying years with but brief cessations. It was ended on Calvary. There the devil did his worst, but in his blind rage overstepped himself, and caused his own undoing. When the dying lips of the God-man uttered the words, — "It is finished," Satan had to slink away acknowledging his defeat. This was the beginning of the end with him.

The prince of the powers of evil manifests a determination, a persistence, in assailing and perplexing the children of men, worthy of a better cause. He is permitted still to do this because we are still on probation. We need still to be tested, to have our mettle proved. The devil finds many who are perfectly willing to continue in his service. They like it. It is in keeping with their unregenerate nature. Some weak ones, who would feebly like to escape, he succeeds in wheedling, or browbeating, into continued submission. But the old tyrant's power is broken. Not one, however, who fights under Christ's flag; not one who has learned the true nature of sin, who hates it, and fights against it; not one who claims Christ's help, and appropriates His victory, can be held by Satan. The old enemy may succeed in tripping him occasionally, for his snares are numerous, and artfully laid; but he rises every time with still greater determination to be more careful, to cling more closely to his Savior, and fight with perseverance the good fight of faith.

Finally the decisive victory will be won. God has His day, some think it is near at hand, when He will write His finis to earthly history. Then evil will not only be curbed and overruled, but it will be forever banished from the regions in which God's children dwell and have their activities. Evil will not be annihilated. The devil, his angels, and all those who have given themselves over to do his will will be confined to regions exclusively devoted to the activities of perverted, distorted lives. But no influence from that dark region will ever be able to reach and disturb the good. Those who have appropriated, by faith, Christ's blood-bought victory during their earthly life, and have fought with Him for personal victories in their own lives, shall enter with Him into His eternal kingdom of purity, righteousness and blessedness, nevermore to feel the blighting breath of evil.

10. God's Care For His People

Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. — [1 Pet. 5:7.]

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows — [St. Matt. 10:29—31.]

WE HAVE MADE a brief study of God's general providence. We have seen, from the unmistakable evidence of His holy Word, that God is still in His world; that He rules, and overrules, all things to the glory of His great name, and the good of his creatures. But the necessities of the situation forced the consideration also of another, and, in some respects, a related subject, — the problem of evil. These might have sufficed to serve our purpose. It is contained therein that, in spite of the evil which abounds, without and within, God is watching over us, that He has our welfare at heart, that He is seeking and securing the largest possible good for each of his children. If God preserves and governs the world, He preserves and governs each part of it. The greater contains the less. But we are so constituted that while generalities may suffice, we much prefer particularities. The child may understand that the parents' general assurances of love and solicitude include all the members of the household, yet the little ones long for the individual caress, the personally and directly spoken word of love. We are all but children of a larger growth and accumulated days. We all long, much as children do, for individual love and care. And the loving care which never fails, even when human love and interest can do no more than suffer with us, which continues to hold our hand through all the intricate paths, and trying experiences of life, and then goes out with us into the untried future, and still insures our safety and happiness, for this, for this above all, do we long. The assurance of such fatherly care as this God abundantly gives his children. Let us, then, for our further instruction and comfort, take up for consideration the subject of God's care for his individual children.

God's Care for Our Temporal Welfare

In the explanation of the First Article, we have been taught to confess not only that God has given to each of us body and soul, all our members, reason and all our senses, and still preserves them; but that it is God who gives to each one of us “clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.” Is this a mere form of words? or does it express the faith of a simpler age, which the world has now outgrown? Truth compels the confession that many do not hold this faith, but it is equally true that many never did hold it. But this is not because men have outgrown these truths, it is because they have gotten too little for them. When men have become so infatuated with the laws and processes of nature that they lose consciousness of the Divine Presence, out of whose eternal and inexhaustible depths come the laws of nature, they are not larger but smaller persons. Their heads have become swollen in a certain way, but it is not because of a richer content; and the soul has become decidedly poorer.

Our very nature cries out in rebellion against the thought of our being fatherless, the sporadic offspring of nothing, without guardianship or help other than that which we, or others like us, can provide. It is hard for a being who thinks, and feels, and wills; whose whole nature is reaching out to lay hold of and sustain itself by grappling something greater, wiser, and better than itself; it is hard, I say, for such a being to feel that he is the sport of blind, unfeeling matter; that he is destined to be buffeted from pillar to post, and finally fall by the way unnoticed and unlamented. This is difficult because it is contrary to facts. Man was made by God, for fellowship with God, for dependence on God; and it is impossible to live a satisfying life without God's fellowship and fatherly care.

Our own inner lives, then, the lives of all men, tell us that if we are to have any satisfaction in life; if our way is to be prospered, we must have the guidance and guardianship of an all-wise and ever-watchful Father; One who is father to our whole being. “With Thee is the fountain of life.” And separated from God our lives are like a stream cut off from its source, it soon dries up, or exists only in stagnant pools. This is true of our physical existence. In God do we live, and move, and have our being. No living

thing exists apart from God. Life of every kind is a spark struck from the central flame, and sustained by contact with it. In man life is the breath of God's nostrils. And He does not live apart from those who have received life from Him. But one may be ignorant of the full truth, and be living in disjointed relationship. This is the cause of man's orphaned feeling, the source of all his woe.

Is not this the fundamental explanation of the cry of the Psalmist, and countless thousands of others:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, the living God” (Ps. 42:1, 2).

Why does the hound-chased hart, full of the fever of fear and unusual exertion, dash for the brook? It takes no process of reasoning to lead it. The dire need of its nature impels it. Without water it will perish, and die a thousand deaths in the perishing. This striking picture is given for the purpose of teaching us a profound lesson. It impresses the truth that there are essential needs grounded in our very nature which incessantly cry out for satisfaction. There are times when we are wholly torn by doubts and fears, and we are never wholly free from them. Our souls are hunted and stalked by the fierce wolves and tigers of outward conflict; within there are insinuating and devouring passions. Then what? Our very nature cries out for help, for a light to guide the way, for a strong arm on which to lean, for some one of wisdom and power and sympathy to whisper into our ears the assurance that if we will lean on Him all will still be well with us. And this call is for none other than God. It may be the call of a lonely, ignorant, debased bushman of Africa's unexplored land; but he is calling for God, no one else can help. It may be the call of a high-browed man of letters who, by tedious methods, has taught himself to believe that there is only law and ordered processes; but these, leaving him in the dark, and un comforted, having failed him, he cries out in despair, and bemoans his fate. And his cry is for God, for He only can satisfy the life He has given. Is this not the meaning of that altar erected to the unknown God in cultured Athens? The mind needs God. Without Him it runs up against a stone wall, or an aching void, at every turn. The heart, in its tumults of emotion, and its agony of longing, needs God, — the fountain of living water. And there is no way of satisfying this ever abiding need of the whole life but in God, the living God. There are

man-made substitutes a-plenty, but they cannot satisfy. Indeed, they only finally increase the sense of need which, for the time, they seem to satisfy.

In answer to man's cry of need, God gives abundant assurance of His fatherly love and care for each one of us. He assures us that He is not a God far removed from our perplexities and struggles. He is a God at hand. He thoroughly understands our needs. His name is Father. This is the pledge of His love and His help. Come, let us draw near the Father's knee and devoutly listen to His words of cheer, and take them to heart.

Do our fears begin to get the better of us, and make us feel that we are but the sport of adverse circumstances? Then let us remember that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Ps. 37:23, 24). Does the devil suggest that God is too distant, and too busy, to care for us? Then let us recall the Father's promise: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10). And again, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). Are the times hard? Are our obligations many and heavy? Does the future look foreboding? Then let us listen to the admonition of the loving Lord:

"Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls...? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast in the oven; how much more will He clothe you?" (St. Luke 12:24, 27, 28).

Are we afraid that we are so small and inconsequential that we are lost in this vast universe with its teeming multitudes? Then let us listen to Christ's own lesson of the minuteness of the Father's care:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (St. Matt. 10:29—30).

Does the path before us grow dim, and lose itself amid the conflict of elements and apparent contradictions? Let us not try unnecessarily to read the distant future, but prayerfully submit ourselves to Him who says to each of us:

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eyes” (Ps. 32:8).

Are our burdens many and heavy? Do we feel our strength waning? Are our knees a-tremble? Then let us accept the gracious invitation of Him who says: Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden; cast all your burdens upon me; for I care for you; I will give you rest. My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.

Our perplexity is often increased by what we cannot fail observing around us. We see evil-doers, workers of iniquity, multitudes of them, who are sleek and fat. They edge out those who are honest, upright, believing and prayerful. And yet they seem to prosper. But the Lord has an explanation for this. He often bestows such blessings as they are able to receive on these people in order to win them. If their hearts are not touched and opened to the higher blessings theirs is only a passing good.

“Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed... Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps. 37:1—5).

There is a poem on the first of our texts, which has meant, and still means, much to me. It is by an unknown author, and of considerable length, but because of its precious Gospel truth I am going to pass it on. It is entitled:

“Your Father’s Care for You.”

"What can it mean? Is it aught to Him
That the nights are long and the days are 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 strong glad music of happy psalms,
And bliss unruffled by any strife;
How can He care for my little life?

"And yet I want Him to care for me
While I live down here where the sorrows be.
When the lights die down from the path I take,
When strength is feeble and friends forsake,
When love and music that once did bless
Have left me to silence and loneliness,
And my life-song changes to sobbing prayers,
Then my heart cries out for a God who cares.

"When shadows hang o'er me the whole day long,
And my spirit is bowed with shame and wrong;
When I am not good and the deeper shade
Of conscious sin makes my heart afraid,
And the busy world has too much to do
To stay in its course to help me through,
And I long for a Saviour — can it be
That the God of the universe cares for me?

"Oh, wonderful story of deathless love!
Each heart is dear to that heart above;
He fights for me when I cannot fight,
He comforts me in the gloom of night;
He lifts the burden for He is strong,
He stills the sigh and awakens the song;
The sorrows that bowed me down He bears,
And loves and pardons because He cares.
Let all who are sad take heart again;
We are not alone in our hours of pain;
Our Father stoops from His throne above
To soothe and quiet us with His love.
He leaves us not when the storm is high,
And we have safety for He is nigh.
Can it be trouble which He doth share?
Oh, rest in peace, for the Lord does care."

Our chief trouble, and a very serious one, is just this, — our faith is weak, we are not able, rather, not willing, to take God at His Word. We forget that

to be God at all He must be the God of truth; and that He has ever revealed Himself as a God of infinite love and mercy. If we would only remember that, in this world of sin, confusion, and conflicting elements, it is impossible for us to understand what is best, and leave it all to our heavenly Father, who cares for us, each of us, with a whole-hearted, never-failing, care; and that in the end we will be able to look back and see that it was so, what a different life we would be living! Peace, the peace of God, would fill our souls.

Such a faith is possible, thousands have possessed it. But it must be cultivated; cultivated by prayer, by living in the Word of God, and through it in loving fellowship with Jesus, and His and our Father. We must learn also to take our moods, and temperamental emotions, in control. With the Psalmist, we must learn to put to our fears the question:

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” What is the cause of your trembling? Who are your enemies? What can they do? Can they overcome God? Is God dead? Is there any danger of His forsaking us? Shake off thy fears, O my soul. “Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Ps. 42:11).

God gave us our bodies. That He cares for the bodily welfare of each one of his children with a solicitous care no one will question who knows and believes God’s Word, no one who has lived in sweet personal fellowship with this Heavenly Father. And forever God is going to care for our bodies. He does not lose sight of them when they crumble back to their native element, the dust. After this purifying process, God is going to call them forth perfectly restored, made fit for heaven, to dwell with Him forever.

God’s Care for Our Spiritual Welfare

We are not going to discuss the relation of body and soul, or the relative importance of the one to the other. We will leave this problem to the physicists and the metaphysicians, if it will do them any good. But that God, as things now are, is more concerned about our souls than He is about our present bodily well-being, should be clear to every student of Scripture. He requires that, where necessary, the ease and comfort of the body, yea, the life of the body itself, be sacrificed for the good of the soul, our own, or those of oth-

ers. Speaking of days of persecution, when the confession of God's truth was considered a sufficient cause for taking a man's life, Jesus says:

“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (St. Matt. 10:28).

This clearly teaches that a man must be true to the faith on which his soul's welfare depends even if it costs him his bodily life. Because of sin the body must decay and return to its primal elements. And, if a temporary physical ill, however severe, must be endured in order to secure a larger, permanent soul-good, God requires that it be endured; yea, though our loving Father, He does not, at times, hesitate to, Himself, act the surgeon.

That God loves the souls of men, His Kingdom of grace here on earth, no one can question who knows the history of His dealings with men. Many have been the times when this kingdom was threatened and fiercely assaulted. And many have been the dark days through which it has passed. But God has ever shown Himself to be with it. What wonderful, far-reaching, interwoven plans has He not devised for its good. What marvelous wisdom, and power, and patience, and love He has ever shown in executing them.

The crowning and indisputable proof of God's loving care for the souls of men is found especially in the truths of the Second Article of this Creed. There are related the great facts which are the historical interpretation of the Master's words:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

No one who has really lived through the experiences of Jesus' intercourse with men, and heard His great intercessory prayer, and watched with Him in Gethsemane, and stood beneath His cross on Calvary, and experienced his part of the Pentecostal blessing, can ever question God's loving care for His people.

But the question which we here especially want to settle for our souls is the one we have settled for our bodies; does God's care for men's souls extend to the individual? Does God care for your soul? my soul? Most assuredly He does. We do not need to go very far to be assured of this. How

large a part of the record of God's dealings with men, under both forms of the Covenant, is taken up with the story of the way in which He sought the welfare of the souls of individuals. God's kingdom of grace is made up of individuals. He deals with them individually as they come into His kingdom, and as long as they are in it. Listen to the encouragement which the loving Lord gives, not to the multitude of his children in the aggregate, but to each one of them individually:

“Because he hath set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation” (Ps. 91:14—16).

The Lord of hosts, He whose will is the only power in the universe; He whose are the armies of heaven, and whose servants are all the creatures of this teeming universe, He is with us, with each of us. He is with us to strengthen us for our duties and our sufferings. He is with us to lift us up when we fall, to forgive us when we sin and repent, to comfort us in our sorrows, and to give us His great salvation.

Does not the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, call Himself the God of Jacob, the God of the solitary man? Jacob was a man of many shortcomings, especially in his early life. He was a bartering kind of a Jew who wanted to make a bargain with the Lord to serve Him if He would promise to give him the common necessities of the bodily life. But because He was God's child, though a weak one, God revealed Himself to him in a wonderful way, went with him, forgave him, strengthened him, and led him, and saved him. The story of that distant day is given for our encouragement. It was a prophecy for all the future. What God was for Jacob He wants to be for you and me, a very present companion and helper.

After a while, when His discipline had accomplished its purpose, God said of Jacob:

“Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince thou hast power with God, and hast prevailed.”

And this was already in this life. So it may be, so God wants it to be, with us. It will result, however, only when we take God to be our Emmanuel,

God with us, our constant companion, friend, and helper. Let us live close to God. Let us realize His abiding presence. “The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.” Let us believe it, rejoice in it, profit by it. And we, too, each of us, shall prevail, and be princes with God, now and forever.

11. The Divine Motive

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto thy servant... — [Gen. 32:10.]

WHAT A SOURCE OF COMFORT it is for us to know that in all our troubles, of both body and soul, we are tenderly invited to cast all our cares on our loving heavenly Father; and to have the assurance that He does really care for us, and that what is best He always does for us. Many of us do not fully appreciate this in the days of health, pleasurable activity, and richly rewarded labors. And when we have held rather aloof from the Lord in these days, there is generally something lacking when the days of feebleness come, and we are largely forsaken of men; then there is a feeling in our breasts that, because of neglected opportunities, when the days were fair, it is presumptuous to claim the Lord's help when the storm breaks. Oh, how much of strength and peace is thus forfeited by us in our hours of need.

Others there are who learn, under all circumstances, to appreciate God's care. They appreciate Him, first of all, for what He is; for His glorious perfections; for His vouchsafed fellowship; and in a secondary sense for His specific acts of helpfulness. To such how sweet is God's presence in the hour of need. As the hands grow feeble, and lose their grasp of things here below, they can feel the tightening of the grip of the Father's hand; as the darkness deepens, there is a voice which keeps whispering, Fear not, I am with thee. And so they experience the truth of the promise:

"It shall be light at eventide."

At this point a question suggests itself, and the question is this: What moves God, our heavenly Father, to so lovingly care for us? This is a question of the greatest importance. Is the cause in us or in Him? Is God's care purchased by some kind of service or deportment, or is it gratuitously given? These and kindred questions must be satisfactorily answered before we can,

in the fullest sense, appreciate God's care. This is the problem we are going to consider this morning. We will take as our subject, the secret of God's fatherly care, or, still more briefly stated — the Divine Motive.

The Fatherhood of God

The root of the secret of God's care for us is found in one word of the First Article of the Creed, — the word Father. We here confess that God is not only a creator, not only a governor; He is not only a being before whose wisdom and power we are called to prostrate ourselves: God is a father, our Father, in the full, rich, sweet meaning of the word.

How do we know that God is a father to the children of men? There are many things bearing unmistakable witness to this truth. There is a testimony borne by the heart of man universally. Is not the helpless form of the babe in the crib, crying out for the warm embrace of a mother's arms, and the nurture a mother's breasts were intended to give, is this not the unimpeachable evidence that there is such a being as a mother? Such a thing as a mother's love and care? Everywhere there is in man a consciousness of dependence, a feeling of being orphaned. Everywhere the strong cry goes out from the heart of man for an all-wise, all-powerful Father to take his children in his embrace, supply their wants, shield them from the ever threatening dangers, lead them safely through the encircling gloom, and assure them that this Father, infinite in power, wisdom and love, is controlling the affairs of life. Thus does man's own nature prove the fatherhood of God.

The Word of God confirms and illuminates that to which the heart of man universally testifies. There is no truth more clearly and emphatically taught in the inspired Word than the fact that God is the father of the children of men; a father by original creation, a father by virtue of a new spiritual creation prepared for all who will accept it. This was one of the supreme messages of Jesus Christ to the world, that He had come forth from the bosom of the Father of the universe to make God more fully and indubitably known to the children of men as their Father, a Father full of pity and forgiveness, a Father desirous of bestowing the wealth of his blessings upon his children. It was Jesus who taught the world to say, with a richness of meaning never before known:

“Our Father who art in Heaven.”

Those whose hearts the breath of the Holy Spirit has touched, know the fatherhood of God not only on the evidence of their natural needy hearts; they know from experience that the words of Jesus about the fatherhood of God are true. Through the Word and the Sacraments a new spiritual life has been begotten in them. And now to that recreated spirit the Spirit of the living God bears direct witness. There is an inner circle of the sons of God. They have become such by the new birth. Theirs is no longer only a natural but also a spiritual sonship. They know by the Spirit the Son, and through the Son the Father, whom to know is eternal life. They know His forgiving love. They are conscious of the pulsations of the new life He gives. They walk in constant fellowship with Him.

It is indeed true that God has a fatherly heart for all the children of men. He does all the good He possibly can for all men. He makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall on all alike. God would woo all men by His kindness. True, God does not give all, or even His best, gifts to all men. It is not, however, because He will not; only because He cannot. Many will not accept them. But even where these spiritual gifts are most ungraciously spurned, the desire on God’s part to bestow them still continues. To his rebellious people He cried out in great grief:

“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.” Come back, come back, and I will still forgive and bless you. Could there possibly be a greater confirmation of this truth than Christ’s lament over the holy city? “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

Not Man’s Lovableness But God’s Love

What is the secret of this solicitude on God’s part? On the part of man such conduct is often easily explained. Men often fawn at the feet of other people, are very solicitous about their every want, dog their steps, and crave an opportunity to serve them because they have wealth, or power, or pull. These men are moved wholly by selfish motives. They are serving because they are hoping to be more effectually served themselves. Others are moved by better, but still not wholly unselfish motives. They admire the qualities,

the culture, the ease, the grace of others; by association they hope to absorb some of it into their own lives. Sometimes we find men and women thus serving from unselfish motives. They love those they serve. They have found admirable qualities in them. There is an attraction in the one served which complements some faculty of the soul of the server. Do any of these things, or any kindred things, explain God's love and care for the children of men? No, the secret of God's loving care for the sons of men is not in their loveliness, but solely in His love.

It is not a bright picture that we are called upon to contemplate in the study of man. It is often as dark as the raven's wing. We are often told that the Scriptures paint the picture in colors too dark and dreary. The question of importance is not whether it is too dark for our taste, but whether it is true. True to the revelations of God, and the intimations of our own better nature, the Master interpreter of the Creed tells us that all of God's ceaseless care for us and all men is "without any merit or worthiness in me." We are all prodigal sons and daughters. We have all forsaken our Father's house. Every one of us has dishonored His name. There is not one of us that has not broken His heart. Where is there one who has not had some of the rags and odor of the swineherd upon him? Who of us, by nature, can rightfully come into the Father's presence without saying:

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son?" Is it not written, and reiterated:

"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one?" (Ps. 14:3). So when we come to consider why God ever keeps His watchful eye over us; and holds our hand in His guiding, protecting one; and provides for our necessities of body and soul, we can come to no other conclusion than this, it is only because of God's love, not by virtue of our loveliness.

If we look only at ourselves, dark, foreboding, hopeless is the picture. Wounds and bruises and putrefying sores stare us in the face on every hand; and with all our own struggling and striving there is no achieving. The one bright ray of light and glory comes from the story of God's love for the unlovely; a love as high as the heavens, and encircling the universe. And this love of God, thanks be to His name, no power in the universe, outside of our own breasts, can keep from embracing us. No change in our condition, other than our lack of faith, can keep this love from us. Not all the ser-

ried ranks of the powers of darkness can keep the streams of God's love from reaching us and refreshing our parched souls. It is raised above the limitations of time and change. And we cannot become so lost in the solitude of the desert, or the teeming throngs of some great metropolis, that this love shall overlook us. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39).

Here, in the closing words of this truly wonderful passage, we have another thought without which it would be utterly impossible for us to grasp the deeper meaning of God's love to men. In Christ Jesus, the God-man, in His ministry, in His passion, O here we learn slowly to spell out the wonderful story of God's love for man. Love is most love as it seeks to bless its beloved. The love for an equal, for some one who has knit his or her soul to ours by graciousness of action as well as character, this is explicable. But herein is the greatness of God's love magnified in that while we were yet rebels, filth-defiled, and rabid, Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us, that He might wash us from our sins in His own blood. Thanks be to God that we have been taught believingly to sing:

"God is love — His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakes and woe He lightens,
God is wisdom, God is love.
E'en the hour that darkest seemeth,
Will His changeless goodness prove;
From the gloom His brightness streameth;
God is wisdom, God is love.
He with earthly care entwineth
Hope and comfort from above;
Everywhere His glory shineth;
God is wisdom, God is love."

Not Man's Merit But His Need

Man is always ready to think that any favors shown, or services rendered him, come as a result of his desert. He cannot easily think otherwise when God does something for him. And even though it be fully established that there is no lovableness in man that God should on that account love him,

yet he does not easily give up the thought that there must be something in him which entitles him to the Father's blessed ministrations. Sometimes men, who have no lovable traits, by the power of intellect, or the resourcefulness of which they show themselves capable, or some rough virtue they exhibit, make others feel under obligations to them. Is it so with God in His relation to man? In spite of man's unlovableness, does God owe him something? Is man indispensable to Him? No, not in the least. God helps us because of our need, not because of our desert. Every man who speaks the truth will have to say with Jacob:

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto thy servant." And as this is true of those who, by grace, have become saints, how much truer of those who have not yet walked in God's ways.

Let us pause, for a moment, to ask ourselves the question: What have we done to obligate God to do so much for us; for our bodily welfare, and, as we shall soon more fully see, for our soul's good? This is what we have done: we have often despised His love, and never fully appreciated it; we have never fully realized the rich measure of blessings God has bestowed upon us, and we have often abused them in a way that reflected on the Giver; we helped to crucify the Lord of glory, and by our weakness and forgetfulness have often wounded Him afresh; there is not one of us, at his best, who has profited as he should from the use of the gifts with which God has so richly blessed us. Truly, we have not merited the least of God's mercies.

What is it in us, then, that makes the appeal to God on our behalf? Not our merit, but, in addition to His heart of overflowing love, our need, our crying need.

Unquestionably, God loved man when he was in his original state of innocence. Could a perfect father forget a perfect child? And He would have continued to love His children had they remained perfect. But it seems that the extent, and, humanly speaking, incurable nature of our need, now that we have become fallen, and bruised, and broken, makes an added appeal to the love of our Father's heart. Have we not seen something like this among the families of men? Have we not seen families where there were children, two or three of them, who were models of deportment, giving every evidence of filial affection, living lives which reflected honor on the parental

care with which they were reared? And in that same family we have seen a prodigal son, or a magdalen daughter, utterly regardless of parental feelings, throwing their counsel to the winds, steeling their hearts against all entreaties and tears, and trampling the family honor into the mire. And have we not seen such parents give evidence that their love, and solicitous care, increased in inverse ratio to the recklessness and unfeeling carelessness of the one loved? The parents would break down, by the sheer weight of their love, the stony heart and obstinate will of the thoughtless, loveless son or daughter.

Have we not seen another illustration of this truth which runs in another direction? Does it not happen that seemingly all the wealth of parental love goes out, not to the strong and healthful members of the family, who are always to be found doing their full duty in helping to bear the household burdens; but to the pale and frail one who, instead of helping, needs constant help? So it is with our Heavenly Father. Our need has put the note of sympathy and solicitude in His love for us. It has bestirred Him to effect plans for our restoration, and nerved His heart and His arm for their execution. And the purpose of it all is to bring us back to Him, to restore His image in us, to fit us for eternal fellowship with Him, and all His, in His heavenly household.

Brethren, let us take home, each one of us, the full significance of the words:

“All this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

It is good for us to know the truth. We must be humbled before we can be exalted. But we will never recognize the discord in our lives till we listen to the music of our Father's house. We will never know how threadbare and filthy our rags are till we have gazed on the robe which Christ has provided for us. We can never know how wretched, weary, and heavy-laden we are till we have experienced the rest to which Jesus invites us. We can never know the nature, extent, and consequences of our prodigality, till we have heard the Father's voice saying: “This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.”

Father in heaven, lift us up that we may feel our pains; show us Thy storehouses of treasures that we may realize our poverty; uncover Thy table

laden with good things that we may know our hunger and thirst; smile upon us that we may learn to know the sorrow of sin; reveal to us Thy beauty that we may come to see how shriveled and haggard and feeble we are; love us that we may loathe ourselves — and when we have finally, and in reasonable measure, learned that all the good with which God showers us is not because of any loveliness on our part, but solely the result of His love; not the result of any merit on our part, but in answer to our need; then, too, we may learn to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him.

12. Man's Obligation To God

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. — [Ps. 100.]

WHAT GREAT SUBJECTS we have been considering: the person and nature of God, the creator; the intricacies, the wonders, the beauties of creation; the littleness and greatness of man; the government of God, which extends from the regulation of planetary systems, and the destinies of nations, to the most minute affairs of the everyday life of each individual. I shall say nothing of the treatment given these subjects. He must be a man of very small intellect who could be satisfied with any efforts of his in the treatment of such themes. If a man had the mind and tongue of an angel his equipment would not enable him to do them full justice. But the treatment of such sublime subjects must be very inadequate, very bungling, indeed, to keep the thinking mind from taking lofty flights, and the devout heart from the heights where adoration and praise are rendered.

How small we feel, how insignificant, when we stand in the presence of these sublime, overpowering manifestations of Divine wisdom, and love, and power. If the things made are so incomprehensibly wonderful, how wonderful must be the Maker.

Some of you may have walked the ocean beach alone in the starlight, and listened to the humanlike moaning of the waves as they broke on some distant bar. Or, more impressive still, you may have walked in solitude the deck of an ocean liner. Overheard, in their mute language, spoke the silent sentinels of the night. Stretched out on all sides was the impressive immensity of old ocean. And, but for the faint throbbing of the engine beneath your feet, and the gentle swish of the waves in the wake of the great vessel, a silence around you so absolute that it revealed to your acute ear the beat-

ing of your own agitated heart. In that hour did you not feel, as you had never felt before, the littleness of man, and the very small orbit in which he plays out his brief earthly life? And at the same time you, probably, felt the nearness of God as you had never experienced it before; a nearness that was all but palpable. Something of the same effect it should have; it will have, on all devoutly thinking people when they stand face to face with such subjects as this First Article of the Apostles' Creed presents.

God's words and works proclaiming Him to be so great, what is the proper attitude for man to take toward Him? That of the most profound humility. The attitude of every man toward God should be wholly that of a dependent and recipient. His prayer should ever be, Lord, give me humbleness of heart, give me light, teach me better to know Thee, and all that pertains to Thee. Such humility is one of the saving graces of character. It is the avenue to a larger knowledge of God. It is the humble mind that comes to know God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14). If we were better people we would be better students of Divine things. If we were more truly humble we would be more truly learned. But humility cannot be put on as a garment. It is a soul quality. In its highest, religious, form it comes from having truly seen God with the eyes of the soul. And its possessor does not know that his face reflects the light which he has caught from God's face.

God is not only infinitely wise and great, He is also infinitely good. He is boundless in His mercy and patience toward the children of men. In His loving kindness God watches over us, and cares for us with a solicitude which never grows wearied or impatient. Assuredly we owe Him something for all this. We can make Him no adequate, no material, return. We can never pay God the debt we owe Him. But there is something He wants, something we can give Him. It is our purpose to consider today what it is that God requires of us in return for His goodness toward us. In other words, man's obligation to God.

There are three words which set forth this obligation. They are, — thankfulness, thanksgiving, and thanks-living.

Thankfulness

In human relations we rightly make much of gratitude. It is an inner state of feeling. It results, in rightly constituted hearts, from the recognition of favors received. And the larger, and more gratuitous, the favors received, the more profound the sense of gratitude. The ingrate is scorned by all right thinking people.

We may use the word gratitude in speaking of man's relation to God, but the customary Biblical Word is thankfulness. And with this begins our obligation to God for what He is, for what He has done, and is still doing, for us. Luther most appropriately concludes the explanation of the First Article with these words:

“For all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him.”

With this accords our text, and a thousand other portions of Scripture. And where one does not carry around in his heart a deep and abiding sense of gratitude toward God which makes the soul glad, glad because it has such a God, glad because it enjoys His fellowship, glad because it has received so many evidences of His goodness, all else is vain. Without this, confessing His name is a mockery, and worship a hollow form.

True gratitude does not quickly come to the point where it concludes that it has discharged its debt. Justice can draw the line and say, this is what I owe, and it is now paid. But gratitude is like the horizon. As we approach what appears to be its boundary it recedes and forms a new one far in the distance. If this is true among men of noble spirit with respect to human obligations, what shall we say of the spirit of thankfulness toward God, who has given life itself, and all the real blessings we enjoy, who is so patient with us in our infirmities, who repays all our thoughtlessness and half-hearted service with ever new deeds of kindness, who has conceived and carried out such great and costly plans for our spiritual and eternal good?

God is so busy in bestowing His fatherly blessings that He does not say a great deal in mere words about our obligation to be thankful. It is mentioned again and again. But the obligation lies in the very nature of the case. And every renewed heart would recognize it without any specific command. The nature, extent and variety of the unpurchasable blessings He is constantly bestowing, themselves tell of the response they should call forth. We cannot recognize, or even faintly appreciate, God's blessings without being prompted to thankfulness. Not to be thankful toward God means that

the steady, rich stream of blessings which God's love and mercy are continually pouring out on us have fallen on the parched desert of unrenewed souls, and never waked a seed to life.

Of how many people this is sadly true. Many are apparently entire strangers to the emotion of thankfulness toward God. It is said of the great Spartan lawgiver, Lycurgus, that he refused to write a law against unthankfulness. When asked why, he replied, "Because unthankfulness is impossible." Alas, the experience of this great man must have been very limited. Especially is his statement far from the truth when it comes to describing man's attitude toward God. Ask the Son of God and of man whether He knew anything of human thanklessness. When He would magnify the goodness of God, it is by declaring that He is kind to the unthankful (St. Luke 6:35). Ask the great Apostle to the Gentiles whether he ever met men who were thankless toward God. In one of his appalling lists of evils which shall specially characterize the last perilous days, he mentions the unthankful along with blasphemers and the unholy.

True thankfulness, in a large rich measure; thankfulness for the gift of life, for our opportunities, for our ability to work and serve, for the destiny which has been made possible for us, and for the help given to speed us on the way; this thankfulness is not going to dwell in the heart of man till he has learned to say, as he reviews all things mentioned in the Creed: "This is most certainly true"; namely, it is all from God, it is all ruled by God for our good. When man comes truly to believe that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17); and that from the least to the greatest they are all bestowed out of grace and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in him, then, and not till then, the way is prepared for some measure of genuine thanksgiving.

We are Christian people, from a thousand testimonies we know that "the Lord is good." In a double sense He is our maker. He has made us and re-made us. We know that His "mercy is everlasting"; that He is a truth-keeping God, that His promises never fail. As a result of this we are capable of recognizing the force of the Psalmist's exhortation, "Be thankful unto Him." We know also that we are not as deeply, or as constantly, thankful as we ought to be. But some thankfulness we have, and there are times when our hearts are deeply touched by the thought of God's great goodness. And we feel that, inadequate return though it may be, the best expression possible for us to give for all we have received is the unreserved surrender of our

whole being to His Fatherly care and keeping. Father, help that this may be the more constant expression of all Thy children.

Thanksgiving

Our heavenly Father wants thankfulness; that is, hearts filled with gratitude toward Him. Without this nothing is acceptable to Him. Without faith in Him, and love for Him, all else is form, a body without a soul. Forms, however expressive they may be of spiritual realities, however beautifully they may be rendered, mean nothing to God unless the hearts of those who render them burn with devotion. The *Gloria in Excelsis*, sung by a person with an angel's voice, does not mean anything to God if back of it there is a heart that is unbelieving, unloving, and disloyal. The first thing God wants is a child, one who looks up to Him as the all-loving Father, one out of whose eyes there shines the light of loving gratitude. Then God does want this to find expression. Just as little as God can be satisfied with a service which does not express the honest convictions and feelings of the one who gives it, so little is He satisfied with a faith and love carefully shut up in the heart and never coming to expression. Where there is true, deep-seated thankfulness it should, it will, find expression in thanksgiving.

If parents have a child which has not been blessed with the gift of speech, they will love it just as much, probably more, than their children with this normal gift. They will want to make up to it what it has been denied. They come to understand its motions, the movements of its lips, the pressure of a hand, the significance of a glance. So God knows our thoughts, our emotions. And it is well, for there are many too deep for utterance. But as no parent would be satisfied to have a normal child going in and out of the house with never a word of love or appreciation, so it is with our heavenly Parent. He wants the thankfulness of the heart expressed in words of thanksgiving.

There is something in the very terms thankfulness and thanksgiving which indicate a larger measure of joy and gladness. God's people ought to be a joyous people. We are exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice always. I know there are many trials and troubles in the world. But there is a medicine to cure the worst sting of all these ills, and to enable us to bear

them with fortitude, if not with absolute lightness of heart; it comes from the father-heart of God, it is the message of His Gospel.

Brother, sister, if you are a child of God, look up. Cast off that oppressive burden of disconsolateness. God, our God, still lives. His sky is still blue and smiles down upon us. The sun still shines. The promises of God are still true. We are still the objects of His unfailing and solicitous care. Around us are His strong and everlasting arms. And He bids us sing a song of thankfulness. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands... Come before His presence with singing. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name."

Let us not forget, brethren, that one of the fundamental purposes of our public worship is to give praise to God, to afford us the opportunity of rendering thanksgiving to Him. Some people seem to have the wholly selfish idea that the service of God's house is only for their enjoyment, or instruction. This is one side of it, and a very important one. God wants the opportunity to bestow His blessings. He wants to enrich us. But He also wants to give us the opportunity of joining in a special service of praise. Let us not neglect the opportunity, let us not fail to do our part.

Our thanksgiving, however, should by no means be confined to the public service on the Lord's day. In our homes there should be an altar not only where supplications are made, but the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered. In our intercourse with our fellowmen everywhere opportunities are offered, and should often be made, for expressing our gratitude to our Heavenly Father.

Thanks-Living

Thankfulness is a fundamental element of a true Christian life. And where it exists the heart will naturally bubble over in thankfulness. Then is the time when "praise is comely." But where the gratitude is real and not assumed, where the praise is the natural overflow of the indwelling gratitude, there it will not end in songs of praise however beautiful in thought or expression. Praise in words is proper, God expects it; but the praise which goes no further than words is poor praise. As true thankfulness is followed by thanksgiving, so true thanksgiving is followed by thanks-living. God wants our

whole life to be a service of thanksgiving. The test of our creed is our deed. And the test of our gratitude is the life we live.

The first and most common way of expressing our thankfulness to God in action is in conforming our lives as nearly as possible to God's standards. Children are constantly revealing the principles and ideals which prevail in their homes. They do not always live up to it fully. But it tells. If purity, love of truth, and considerateness for others, are the principles there taught and practiced, it is going to show when the inmates of that home go out into the world. And they will not need to proclaim the fact, in words, from the housetops. Where these principles are taught but, as sometimes happens, some of the children disregard them, they show themselves very ungrateful, and bring shame and sorrow to their parents. In like manner, if we recognize God as the giver of all good, if we own His authority over our lives, if we have been brought personally into right relation to Him; if His truth is actually our guide, and His Spirit our teacher and prompter, then the world cannot help knowing whose children we are. "Obey my voice and do them (my commandments), according to all which I commanded you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer. 11:4).

Our thankfulness to God is also expressed in terms of life when we do what we can for His Kingdom. The officers in our congregations, the teachers in our Sunday schools, and all other workers in the great cause, whatever their sphere, when they give of their time, surrender their ease, and do it out of gratitude to the dear Lord who has done so much for them, and because they are desirous of having others share their blessings, these are all giving thanks to God in one of the most effective ways. But let no one think that he is excluded from this privilege because he holds no official position. The kind, helpful deeds done for those in distress, the word of encouragement spoken to the downcast, belong to the same class. The good Samaritan was truly giving thanks to God in his ministry of mercy. And the echoes of that hymn of thanks-living are still ringing down the ages. Jesus tells us that the visit to the sick and needy, the giving of a garment to the poor, and the piece of bread and cup of water given to the hungry, when given in His name, and for His sake, will be considered worthy to be mentioned on the great day of final accounting. They are truly deeds of thanks-living.

We may even go further. Some of the sweetest songs of thanksgiving in our lives are not expressed in terms of action, but of enduring. We are God's dear children, but we are still living in a world of sorrow and suffering.

From many of them it is impossible to be here delivered. In it all, however, we are ever the objects of God's loving care. When it is not best to keep them from us, He sustains, and compensates us by the bestowal of still richer blessings. Now when, in wisdom and tenderest love, God allows suffering and bereavement to come, and we still trust His love and care; when we suffer loss, but take God's Word for it that we shall still thereby be somehow enriched; when pain lacerates our nerves, but we find our power of endurance and our solace in our Father's tender touch, then, in our tears, are written some of the most precious of our hymns of thanksgiving. All this is possible, but possible only then when in our hearts there dwells the assurance that, whatever betide, "The Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations."

The Second Article

13. The Name Above Every Name

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — [Phil. 2:9—11.]

WE TAKE A DECISIVE STEP FORWARD with the subject we take up for consideration today, — the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. We now stand face to face with the very heart of the Gospel, indeed, of all Revelation, — the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The First Article of the Creed leads us to heights where, so far as the higher reaches of the subject are concerned, no human mind can fully follow. It leaves us there lost in admiration of the greatness and entrancing beauty of God and His works. We, of course, look at God as He is revealed in the First Article, and in the Law, and in nature, with the eyes of Christians; but, if the Commandments and the First Article could be completely divorced from the content of the Second Article, we would still be left to grope our way in the darkness of hopelessness. We would have a certain knowledge of a God, sublime in His nature, awful in His sovereignty, exacting in His demands, wonderful as a workman, a careful provider of temporal needs; but still a God afar off, and unapproachable. And we would be left to feel, all the more, our emptiness, our forlornness, our helplessness.

It is in Jesus Christ that God draws near to men to save them. In Him men first learn really to know God, the wideness of His mercy, the height and depth of His love. In this Second Article we come to know God, not

only as Creator and Governor, not as Law-giver and Judge only; but as a compassionate Father, revealing in His Son His yearning for the return of his prodigal sons and magdalen daughters. And not only yearning for their return, but paying their debts, bridging the chasms, burning away the barriers, and providing food for the way, thus making it possible for them to return.

"I believe in Jesus Christ.

This is the thought with which the Second Article begins. The words "I believe" are not found in the opening sentence, but they are understood; for this sentence stands in such close relation to the First Article that the words "I believe" do not need to be repeated after the connective with which the second begins. We ought to remember also that the words "I believe" belong not only to each of the three articles, but to each statement of them.

I believe in Jesus Christ. No more momentous, no farther-reaching words can human language contain, or human lips utter. Indeed, truthfully spoken, this is a sentence which can have its birth only in a soul that the Divine Spirit overshadows, and breathes upon; for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

I believe in Jesus Christ. If we can truthfully, reverently say these words, into what a glorious fellowship they bring us. They bring us into the company of the sainted prophets whose eyes were anointed to see afar off the rising of the Day-star out of Jacob, and the coming of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. They make us brothers of the fearless Baptist, who bore witness that "this is the Son of God." They open the way into that inner circle where dwelt that other John, who wrote to the end that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name." Indeed, we can not grasp the goodly fellowship of all those whose one binding tie, and urging motive, is expressed in the sentence: I believe in Jesus Christ. Saints Paul and Augustine, Bernard and Luther, Zinzendorf and Wesley, and more than ten thousand times ten thousand others not so well known, many of whose names are lost to human records, but written fair and large on the pages of the book of life; all these found their life, their bond of union, their inspiration, and their joy in this one name, — Jesus Christ.

Let us today, in a general way only, further consider this fruitful subject. We take as our theme:

The Name Above Every Name

Lord Jesus, let our every thought of Thee be a prayer. Oh, Thou before whom the angels stand in wonder touched with amazement, ever desiring to penetrate farther into the glorious mysteries hidden in Thee, what can we poor mortals, with our enfeebled minds, and shortened vision, understand of Thee; what can we, with our tied, stammering tongues, say worthy of a theme so exalted? As of old Thou didst anoint the eyes of the blind and make them to see, so open the eyes of our minds that we may understand what Thou art to us, if we cannot understand all that Thou art. Touch the poor, palsied, withered hands of our spirits so that we may reach them forth, and touch at least the hem of Thy garment as Thou passeth by. And it shall be well with us.

I. The Uniqueness Of His Person

The Name of Jesus Christ is the Name above every Name because of the Uniqueness of His Person.

As we take up this Second Article may we have the grace of the reverent Baptist, who humbly confessed his unworthiness even to stoop and unloose the latchet of the Master's shoes. May our one motive be, as we pursue these studies, to honor the Savior by gaining a fuller knowledge of Him, followed by a more devoted service.

The uniqueness, the unparalleled character, of the person of Jesus Christ is indicated in the verses preceding our text. They tell us that He was in the form of God, and robbed not God by claiming equality with Him. The ancient heathen sages dreamed of gods, and recounted their virtues and exploits. But in their loftiest flights they never dreamed of anything approaching what we find in Jesus Christ. Here is One who came forth from the ranks of the lowliest, who grew to man's estate in the obscure village of a province of no good repute, a stranger to the schools and courts of earth, and proclaimed Himself the God who antedated all the ages of history. He declared that He came to set up a Kingdom which, in spite of all the vicissi-

tudes of time, should out-last time, and be the salt of all other institutions. He boldly declared that He was the Light and Life of men, and that without Him men would walk in darkness forever.

Have these and the many other claims of Jesus Christ been made good? Was He what He claimed to be? Did He do, is He doing, what He claimed He was going to do? In answering these questions we are not going to consider, first of all, the testimony of prophet and evangelist. The inspired Word of God settles all these questions for us. It would settle them for us if every human voice in the universe was raised against it. We are not going to appeal to great theologians and Church-workers. We recognize them as the most competent of witnesses, but the world says they are prejudiced in favor of their own cause. At this point we shall consider the testimony of but a few of the many great minds who were not professed advocates of the cause of the King of kings, but have spoken out boldly their views concerning Jesus Christ.

The Jewish nation, as such, rejected Christ, and put Him to death; but many of the most brilliant Jewish minds have confessed admiration for His character. The great Jewish philosopher Spinoza calls Him the symbol of Divine wisdom. A name, by the way, given Jesus by the prophets of old. The great speculative philosophers are generally regarded as fighting shy of yielding anything to the claims of Christ, but Kant and Jacobi both held Jesus to be the symbol of ideal perfection. Schelling and Hegel do not hesitate to pronounce Him the highest realization of the human and the Divine. And the great German genius Goethe boldly declares:

“I esteem the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendor of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so divine a kind as only the Divine could ever have manifested on earth.”

We have nothing but contempt for the personal character of Rousseau. He certainly knew nothing of Jesus Christ by way of personal fellowship with Him. But as a result of his study of the historic Christ, and His work, he wrote this panegyric:

“How petty are the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, compared with the Gospels! Can it be that writings at once so sublime and so simple are the work of men? Can He whose life they tell be no more than a mere man? Is there anything in His character of the enthusiast or the ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in His ways, what touching grace in His teachings! What loftiness in His maxims, what profound wisdom in His words! What presence of mind, what delicacy and aptness in His replies! What an empire over His passions! Where is the man, where is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die without display? My friends, men do not invent like this; and the facts respecting Socrates, which no one doubts, are not so well attested as those about Jesus Christ. These Jews could never have struck this tone, or thought of this morality, and the Gospel has characteristics of truthfulness so grand, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, their inventors would be even more wonderful than He whom they portray. ... Yes, if the death of Socrates be that of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.”

The first Napoleon was a man of iron, of great intellect, and for a time he made all Europe tremble. In the solitude of St. Helena he daily read the Bible with much eagerness and reverence. In conversation one day about the great personages of history, as was oft his custom, he turned suddenly to one of the company with the inquiry:

“Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?”

The officer to whom the question was addressed had to admit that he had never thought much on the subject. “Then I will tell you,” replied the exiled emperor.

“I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man, but not one is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force! Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him. ... The Gospel is no mere book, but a living creature, with a vigor, a power, which conquers all that opposes it. ... The soul, charmed with the beauty of the Gospel, is no longer its own: God possesses it entirely: He directs its thoughts and faculties; it is His. What a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ! Yet in His absolute sovereignty He has but one aim — the spiritual perfection of the individual, the purification of his conscience, his union with what is true, the salvation of his soul. Men wonder at the conquests of Alexander, but here is a Conqueror who draws men to Himself for their highest good.”

De Wette possessed one of the keenest intellects to be found in Germany during the first half of the past century. His learning was as extensive as his mind was acute. Unfortunately he was one of the leaders of destructive Bib-

lical criticism. He undoubtedly did much to lessen the faith of many in God's revealed Word. But he could not overthrow the Christ of the Word. And here is his witness to Him:

“This only I know, that there is salvation in no other name than in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified; and that nothing loftier offers itself to humanity than the God-manhood realized in Him, and the Kingdom of God which He founded.”

Lord Kelvin, one of the most renowned of British scientists, was once asked what he considered his greatest discovery. As unhesitatingly as it was unexpected, he replied, “My greatest discovery was when I found Jesus Christ.”

Testimonies such as these can be multiplied many, manyfold. Add them all as corroborative evidence, we might say as evidence drawn from reluctant hearts; add this all to the evidence of the Apostles, and seers of the Church; multiply this by the evidence of the innumerable thousands of the lowly of all ages, untrained as to mind and the arts of expression, but whose hearts were touched, and whose lives have borne the strongest witness to the power of Jesus Christ to heal, and comfort, and strengthen and save unto the uttermost, and what a volume of unimpeachable testimony we have to the outstanding, sublimely unique character of Jesus Christ.

We, no doubt, have had our difficulties, our doubts. Who has not? There are still problems concerning Jesus and His work which human mind is not able to demonstrate; and never will be able, at least in this life, to penetrate. He would not be God were this not so. He would not have done a Divine work were this not so. But that Jesus Christ actually lived no one but a fool will question. That He was more than man no informed, penetrating mind doubts. May we all be fully able, because of what He has wrought in our own lives, to say:

“My Lord, and my God.”

II. The Victories He Has Won

The Name of Jesus Christ is the Name above every Name because of the Victories He has won.

To get our bearings, let us recall the Gospel story we know so well. We view the humble birth, the unpretentious life, of Jesus of Nazareth. We re-

view the little band of peasants He gathered about Him; men without wealth or influence. With these men in training to continue His work, Jesus began to proclaim the establishment of a Kingdom which should conquer the earth. What happened? Jesus was Himself taken captive by an angry mob. He was tried and condemned by both Church and State. He was put to death as a malefactor on the cross. His little band was scattered. But after these experiences they rallied. They claimed that Jesus had arisen, that He had given them new instructions, and a new commission.

And now they went forth, this little band of peasants, on their world-conquering mission in the name of Jesus Christ. Their foundation doctrines were that Jesus was the Son of God as well as the Son of man, that He had lived and died in the world for the purpose of taking away the sins of the world; that He had risen from the dead, and was seated at the right hand of God. This doctrine, in all its features, was of a nature to excite either the resentment, or the scorn of the worldly wise, or prejudiced, people. Human wisdom could have prophesied for this little band no more than a struggling provincial existence as a fanatical sect. Everything of the world's wisdom and pomp and power was against them.

Let us be a little more specific. Not only were the general tendencies of a corrupt human nature against the teachings and practices of the disciples of Jesus Christ, but the organized forces of the world were against them. There was Israel with its fifteen hundred years of national life and religious history against them. Their national pride, and their religious prejudices, made them antagonists of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And they used not only the arguments of their best trained men, but to these they added the arguments of the prison and the sword. The heathen world naturally looked with contempt on Jewish teachers who came with the strange message of a Jewish Savior, who was going to reclaim the world, when He could not save Himself from the ignominious death of the cross, inflicted by His own fellow countrymen. The Gospel was to them, indeed, foolishness. But the heathen people were generally rather tolerant of opinions so long as those who entertained them were only theorizers. But the Jesus whom the Apostles preached was not a mere theorizer. And the Apostles themselves were not mere theorizers. They proclaimed the Gospel not simply as a message, but as a power. It was to change men's lives. It presented new principles, new ideals, which were to be wrought into, and change, everything which seriously affected men's lives. And the preachers of this Gospel showed that it

had so affected them. Their faithful converts showed that it had worked a change in them also. The followers of Jesus would offer no sacrifices to the false gods of the heathen, they would take no part in their worldly amusements. The strict moral lives of all the faithful Christians was a constant rebuke to the gross immoralities of the heathen. This challenged attention. As a result the heathen did what the Jews had done, they became opposers.

At first, heathen opposition took the form of an attempted revival of their own religion, an hysterical attempt at revival. Everything which would appeal to any side of the people's nature was tried. They employed elements of every known religion. Their pride, their love of show and mystery, the sensuality of their unregenerate natures, the sense of meritoriousness; by all these, and more, it was sought to anchor the people to the old forms. When they all failed, every art of the trained controversialist was tried. They tried to beat down the messengers and the message of Christianity by sneers. The wonders of the Gospel were parodied in the places of amusement. Christianity was denounced with all the fire of impassioned rhetoric. It was met with the profoundest arguments, and the most artful sophistries, of the most learned and eager philosophers. When all this failed, the followers of Jesus were beset with the torch and sword. They were hunted like dangerous beasts. Armies were sent against them. Every device Satanic ingenuity could devise was employed for their destruction. But when the armies grew tired of blood and pillage, when the arms of the executioners fell from utter exhaustion, the cause of Jesus Christ still lived and flourished. The Truth which had its humble earthly origin in the stall of a cavern stable, the doctrine which embodied the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, and was proclaimed, at first, only by a little handful of Galilean peasants, was more than a match for the combined wit and learning and power of the Jewish and heathen world. The Church which had started out homeless, performing its ministries in the market-places, in the homes of its humble artisan adherents, in the forests, and in the dens and caves of the earth, had triumphed over the costly, magnificent temples at Jerusalem, at Athens, and at Rome. That little band of unarmed followers of Jesus, unpolished by contact with the higher things of the earth, had met a world enraged and in arms, — and won.

How are we to account for these cumulative victories? A series of victories so out of proportion to any mere human estimate which could be placed on the message, or the messengers? It can be satisfactorily explained only in

one way. They were won not by any power of man. They were won only by the unique person and work of Jesus Christ. These humble men had gone forth to their work consecrated by Jesus Christ, not only to tell about Jesus Christ, but to bring Jesus Christ to men. By Him whom they brought to men all fear had been burned out of their hearts, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. Instead of the wisdom of the world, they were endowed with that divine wisdom which makes men holy, which makes them not only the bearers of a message, but the living witnesses of the power of Jesus Christ to renew and save. These glorious victories of the Church, of Jesus Christ in and through the Church, were won by the fulfillment of Christ's promise:

“Lo, I am with you alway.”

III. The Unique Character and Supreme Importance Of His Work

The Name of Jesus Christ is the Name Above every Name because of the Unique Character and Supreme Importance of His Work.

Many great victors have left their mark, for a time at least, on the world. Most of these have been conquerors whose paths have been strewn with ashes and bleaching bones, and commemorated by the broken-hearted cries of bereaved wives and mothers, and the piteous wails of orphaned and suffering children. Jesus Christ, “with His pierced hands lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages;” but not one heart has He ever broken, save by the touch of a loving hand which has convinced of sin; not one tear has He ever wrung from a human eye, save of sorrow for wrongs done and the joy of loving service missed.

We shall not at this time attempt to enlarge on Christ's relationship to all fundamental world-problems. Creation, world-government, the intellectual, moral, and spiritual progress of humanity, down to the most minute social problem, are bound up in the question of the relationship of Jesus Christ to the world. This is so profoundly true that no one can approach any of these problems in the right way who lacks this vision. But this is too extensive a subject for present treatment. We can give but the briefest statement of the distinctive work Jesus came to do, and of the structure reared on this foun-

dation during the ages since. This work is variously stated in Holy Writ. The angel of the Lord, who came to dispel the gloomy thoughts of Joseph, expressed the whole compass of the Lord's work in the significant name he gave Him:

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins.”

Many great hearts have given themselves to the task, the ever-present, the ever-pressing task of relieving the wants of men. Many are today engaged in this work. They are seeking to give men better living conditions, better government, a better outlook on life. But when all that was dreamed of yesterday becomes the reality of today there are wants still. And the deepest, the most insistent, still remain. And if we could succeed in establishing a material paradise, where men never knew the blasts of winter, or the parching heat of summer; where hunger and thirst never came, save in sufficient measure to enhance the delight in partaking of the abundance at hand; if there was no oppression on the part of the powers that be; if there was no material desire ungratified: man would still be a creature of want. His origin, and especially his destiny, would trouble him. The specter of wrongs done would haunt him. He would want peace of conscience, not that which comes by drinking of the waters of Lethe; but the peace which comes from drinking of the fountain of living waters, which gives true vision of life, while it cleanses the soul, and restores the palsied faculties of man.

This is the work Jesus Christ came to do, which He alone can do. He is the real animating spirit of every movement which has any actual good in it for the children of men. But first of all Jesus came to be a Savior from sin. Not by saying there is no such thing as sin, or by speaking lightly of its nature and destroying power; but rather, by contrast with the snowy whiteness of His own life, and by the detestation He showed, in word and deed, for sin, to paint, in its true colors, its hellish blackness; and then, by the greatest of sacrifices, the surrender of His own precious life, to free us from its curse and power.

We can, in a general way, measure the work Christ has done in the world by enumerating the institutions established and transformed by the spirit He has given; by calling to mind the agencies for securing man's good He has been instrumental in setting in motion; by noting the upward trend of every feature and department of the complex life of men where the spirit of Christ

measurably reigns. But no human intelligence is capable of even approximating, in any direction, the extent of what Christ Jesus has done in the world, or is doing today. Perhaps one of the best ways of getting an idea of what the presence and operation of Christ means to the world is to try and picture to ourselves what this world would be without Him.

There is still much of filth and vice in the world, but what would it be without the sanctifying presence of Him who knew no sin? There is still much of selfishness in the world, what would it be without the brotherhood taught by that loving elder Brother? We have not by any means reached the point where social relations are what they should be; but what would they be without the birthright the God-man brought to childhood? without the gentleness and virtue He has given to womanhood? without the shield He has thrown around the sanctities of home-life? What would life be worth here if generation after generation had to come and go not only without hope for the present, but without hope for the future? if we had to live in a state of society where might was right, where selfishness reigned supreme, and the end a gaping grave into which no ray of light or hope ever entered? This would be the state of things had Christ no part in life. It is the condition where He does not truly rule men's lives. To change all this He came to earth. And all that is best in human life is the result of His work. One of America's leading men said, recently, in a public address:

“Jesus Christ started the mightiest revolution of all time.”

This is true, but it was a peaceful revolution. Whenever any other forces than those of love and truth have been used, it was contrary to Christ's will. His way is to touch and transform the individual human life. And as the number of transformed human lives increases it leaves its impress on every department of social life. Lecky, the great rationalist, admits that Christianity has been the main source from which has come the moral development of Europe. Thinking men need no better apologetic for the worth of Christianity, which means the worth of Christ, than what He has been doing in the world these nineteen hundred years. And the time will come when, in very truth, every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

14. Jesus Christ The Son Of God

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. — [St. Matt. 16:13—18.]

WITH PRACTICAL UNANIMITY all the civilized world unites in singing the praises of Jesus Christ. Philosophers and statesmen, scientists and men of letters, warriors and men of affairs have joined in according to Jesus of Nazareth the highest measure of praise. In the face of all this, there is still room for Christ's own old-time question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Indeed, there is most imperative need of this question in the world at large. And more, there is still reason for addressing to Christ's own professed disciples, to many of the members of the churches, Jesus' further question:

"Whom say ye that I am?"

Why is this discussion about the person and nature of Christ still necessary? Have not these nineteen hundred years sufficed to settle these questions? So far as the testimony of God's Word is concerned, they are settled. And so far as we are concerned, they are settled. But there are many who persist in following their own opinions in open defiance of the teaching of God's Word. Because they insist in promulgating their opinions this discussion is still under way. And, unfortunately, some of those who are most liberal in their praise of the character of Jesus, and of the tasks He attempted, are

most determined in their opposition to all the claims which Jesus put forth respecting His own person, and to those facts in His life which go to substantiate these claims, such as His miracles.

The question, “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?” is a fundamental one. It has to do with the foundation on which rests the whole plan of salvation. As we answer this question depends whether or not we have a Savior in the Biblical sense of the word.

The answer to Christ’s question, “Whom say ye that I am?” is a twofold one. In the Creed itself it is thus expressed: “I believe ... in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” In the more explicit words of the explanation, we thus answer this question: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord.” We shall today consider but the first part of the answer to the question, “whom say ye that I am?” which is that

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God

I. What It Means

We will first explain what we mean by the statement that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

It is necessary not only to make the statement that we hold Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, but to explain what we mean by the statement. This necessity arises from the fact that many accept, and themselves use, the terms setting forth the Divinity of Jesus Christ, but put an interpretation on them which annuls their real force. Calling Jesus Christ the Son of God, they explain, when pressed, that they mean that He is the Son of God only in the same sense in which we may all be called the sons of God. Though most of these are willing to credit Jesus with a higher degree of those qualities which make Him a Son of God than can be attributed to any of us. It is not in this sense that we, the Apostles’ Creed, the Bible, use the term “Son of God” as applied to Jesus Christ.

Our sonship is separated from the Sonship of Jesus Christ by an infinite distance. We are sons, He is the Son. We are sons by a new spiritual birth, He is the only begotten, the eternally begotten, Son.

When we speak of Jesus Christ as the Son of God we mean that He is God in the very same sense in which the eternal Father is God, “very God of very God, of one substance with the Father.” We mean that every attribute, every quality which exists in the person of the eternal Father, exists also in Jesus Christ. And this without any alteration or diminution. “I and my Father are one.” There is no subordination of the Son to the Father as to nature, only as to order. The almightiness of the Father is the almightiness of the Son. The wisdom of the Son is the exact counterpart of the wisdom of the Father. As the Father is capable of being everywhere present, so is the Son. Not one whit of the truth, majesty, or glory which inheres in, and is natural to, the Father is abated in the Son. He “is the image of the invisible God.” And “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” (Col. 1:15; 2:9).

Jesus Christ did not grow into His Godhead. Neither was He, as to His Deity, created, for there never was a time when He was not. He is the eternally begotten Son of the Father. We here touch on mysteries, the outer circle of which only can the mind of man faintly touch, at the full meaning of which mortal words can only hint. These are truths which only the infinite mind of God Himself can fully comprehend. These truths, so far as the facts are concerned, God has very clearly revealed to us in His Word. In the fourth Gospel, the specific purpose of which is to impress upon us the truth “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name,” the Apostle tells us that in the beginning was the Word, ... and the Word (Christ) was God. ... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Indeed, creation had its inception in Jesus Christ, and will have its completion in Him. “By Him were all things created.” For Him all things exist. And we come to a true understanding of all created existence only as we find the key to the solution in the person, ministry, and final purpose of Jesus Christ Himself.

The question concerning the essential oneness of Jesus Christ with eternal God is not one of mere theoretical interest. It has a decisive bearing on practically all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. If He was not the Son of God there is nothing of revealed religion which stands. Being the Son of God He speaks with an absolute authority. His promises are true, we build upon them with certainty. Our approach to Him, our fellowship with Him, is altogether different from what it would be if He was only in some very high sense God’s representative. Indeed, in no true, full sense

could Jesus Christ be our Savior if He was not truly God. The Church rests wholly on this foundation. Grafted into Him as the Divine head and body, we are members of His Kingdom. On the truth of Christ's essential Godhead rests the efficacy of the Sacraments. These are statements of such far-reaching importance that they should be accepted only on the ground of adequate evidence.

II. The Proofs

Let us, then, consider the proofs on which we base our belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Are there any clear, positive proofs in substantiation of the far-reaching statements we have been making concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ? We would be very ignorant, or very wicked, or both, if we made such statements without abundant proof of the clearest and most undeniable character. There can be no shadow of doubt respecting this truth on the part of anyone who reverently accepts the teachings of God's Word. There is no other truth of Revelation more fully, more clearly, or more emphatically taught than this, that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God; or taught in such a rich variety of forms. Indeed, in the light of God's Word, of history, and of Christian experience, to proceed to adduce the proofs of Christ's Divinity is much like proving that the sun is the source of light and heat.

Even the Old Testament abundantly proves the Godhead of Jesus Christ. This venerable record, the revelation of God's nature and works, would lose altogether its distinctive character if from it were stricken all the teaching concerning the person and work of the coming Messiah. And the burden of its teaching is that He was to be One sent from God, a greater than man, the Son of God, God Himself. For instance, in that well known passage in Isaiah nine, the Messiah is called the Mighty God. And the word used is never employed but to indicate the innermost essence of the ineffable Deity Himself.

Furthermore, all the forms and sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation have been so accurately, so minutely fulfilled in Christ Jesus, and this, remember, after the lapse of more than a thousand years after their institution, that they can be explained only on the ground that He is the Divine fulfillment of a divinely devised plan. In other words, during all the cen-

turies of Old Testament service the Son of God, whom we know in history as Jesus Christ, was the living heart of it all.

In the New Testament the distinctive names of God are applied, without any qualifications, to Jesus. By the angel fresh from the courts of heaven He is announced to be "Christ the Lord." St. Paul, who at first fiercely opposed Christ's claims to be the Son of God, came to know, and, by inspiration, declared Jesus to be "God over all, blessed forevermore." St. John, whose inspired vision penetrated farthest into the mystery of Divinity, proclaims that Jesus is true God, and that in Him alone is eternal life. And the eternal Father Himself, once and again, spoke down directly from heaven, declaring: "This is my beloved Son." But what need that we adduce further statements of this character? Time would fail us to recall all the passages of Holy Writ in which Jesus Christ is called God.

Not one whit less positive or convincing, as to the Divinity of Christ, are the statements of Scripture setting forth the fact that He possesses, in full degree, all the qualities which inhere in God the Father, and make up His Godhead. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is declared to be everywhere present with His people and will be so till the end of days. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and performed all other kinds of miracles by His own power. He has the right and power to forgive sins. He foretold the future, not a few of which prophecies have been already so circumstantially fulfilled as to prove irrefutably that only God could have spoken them. The right of universal judgment belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the arbiter of the destinies of men and angels. And all honor is to be given to Christ, not only by the children of men, but by the hosts of heaven.

This is by no means an exhaustive catalogue of Christ's divine attributes, or of the prerogatives He exercises in view of them. But it is enough. Nothing is wanting to prove Him Divine, very God, of the same essence as the Father. But we need not be alarmed by such an array of infinite powers. The Son of God is as infinite in His love and mercy as He is in truth and holiness.

These Divine attributes are ascribed to Christ not only by God the Father Himself, in person, and through His inspired penman; but they are claimed by Christ Himself, again and again. As we have shown, men everywhere have ascribed to Jesus a preeminent degree of the virtues. This is true even of those who have denied Him essential Godship. What a strange, contra-

dictory procedure! If Jesus Christ was not truly God, then not only would all Scripture be untrustworthy; but Jesus Himself was the most unreliable, untrustworthy being that ever walked the earth. If Jesus Christ was not truly God, He was guilty of the greatest blasphemy ever uttered.

But we need no other proof of all that is claimed for Christ than Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We know that He is the Son of God, and that not because of the results of Hebrew and Greek syntax. Grammarians did not make Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. We have not reached such lofty heights by such tedious and uncertain paths. We know that Jesus Christ is God because God's Word says so. But we know it also because He has done, and is still daily doing, what only God can do. We know that Jesus is God because He has touched, and quickened, and healed our poor, dead hearts, which no one but God could touch and heal. We know that He is the Son of God because the stream which issues from His cleft side suffices to wash away the soul-stain which all the rivers of earth would not suffice to cleanse. We know that He is the Son of God because He is living in our hearts, and speaking to our souls.

The character and work of Jesus Christ settle forever the question of His Divinity. There is a transcendency in His life; an infinite, undefinable element in His character which refuses to be brought within the limits of mere human thought. Jesus Christ is Himself the greatest of miracles, for whose existence and manner of life there is no rational solution till we come to recognize that in Him dwells all the fullness of Godhead bodily. And when our hearts have felt the thrill of His touch, when there has been an incoming of the virtue which ever proceeds in richest measure from Him, when the life of which He is the inexhaustible fountain has become the source of a new life in us, then can we truly say, I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Then also we can, and will, cry out to Him, "My Lord, and my God."

III. The Promises

In concluding, let us consider the promises given to those who hold this faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

This faith is itself God-given. Jesus says of Peter's confession: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Human philosophy, history, and litera-

ture do not suffice to convince men that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Indeed, these agencies, when men rely too much on them, become hindrances instead of helps. Only those can truly know this truth who submit themselves to be taught of God.

Only those who have been thus taught, only those who do truly believe that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, are blessed. Without this men may be rich and cultured. They may enjoy the things which minister to their creature well-being, or their aesthetic tastes. But only those can be really blessed of God who accept Jesus Christ as His dear Son. Till this is the case they can have no real Savior. Without a Divine, atoning Savior they can have no forgiveness of sins, and are without that perfect righteousness which makes men acceptable in God's sight.

Jesus Christ says, "on this rock," that is on the confession that He is the Son of God, "I will build my Church." Those who deny this truth do not belong to the Church of Christ. They might be as numerous as the sand on the seashore, they might be most admirably organized, they might be actively engaged in many excellent kinds of benevolent work; but if they do not stand on this cornerstone of God's own laying, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they cannot be recognized as members of the Christian Church. It is only when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as well as the Son of man, enters into a man's life that his heart is purged, a new life begotten, and true peace and joy ensues.

On this God-laid foundation of a Divine Christ has been reared the greatest, and the most beneficent institution the world has ever seen, — the Christian Church. Despised by many, sneered at, fought with every conceivable weapon, the Church of Christ has gone on, these nineteen hundred years, enlarging its borders, leaving its impress for good on all other institutions, giving men new visions as to character and usefulness, and fitting them for the perfect life into which this is to develop.

As ever before, so the Church of God now has many enemies. Some are without, bold and aggressive; some are professed friends, but kiss only to betray; but in spite of all, open enemies and professed friends, who strike in secret, the Church stands, and will continue to stand, and do her work, till she has finished her God-given task. The Master Himself has spoken it, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Let us not be faint-hearted, but believing.

As we rejoice in the pardon we have for the guilt of sin; as we hope to be more and more liberated from the power of sin in our lives; as we value the peace of heart which comes from assured fellowship with God in and through Christ; as we rejoice in the continually brightening hope of a richer, fuller, finally perfect life in the fellowship of the saints around the throne of glory, let us not be robbed of our confidence in the truth that Jesus is the very Son of God. This is the ultimate foundation of everything in the Christian life. This is the truth in the true, full appropriation of which alone there can be real life, peace, joy.

15. Jesus Christ The Son Of Man

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. — St. Luke 24:39.

I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY THE SON OF GOD, of the same essence as the eternal Father; begotten, as to His Godhead, before all worlds, very God of very God. This is the confession we recently considered. It is one of the fundamental truths of the whole Bible. It is the whole-hearted confession of all who unreservedly accept the Bible as God's Word. Without holding this truth no one has a Savior who really saves. There is no Savior other than the one who is essentially the Son of God. But in thinking of the almightiness of the Son of God, of His session on the eternal throne of glory, we must not forget that Jesus Christ also was, is still, and forever will be, the Son of man.

The statements of the Creed, and its explanation, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord," and "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity," while absolutely essential, express but half of the true faith with respect to the person of the world's Redeemer. Indeed, before we can have a Redeemer from sin, death and the power of the devil, we must have the other half of the truth concerning the person of Jesus Christ. And this half of the truth is expressed in the words, "born of the Virgin Mary," "true man, born of the Virgin Mary." Accordingly, we will today take up this part of our Christian confession concerning the person of our Redeemer,

I Believe That Jesus Christ Is the Son of Man

I. Jesus Was Really A Man

Let us first give emphasis to the fact that Jesus was a man not only in form and appearance, but in reality.

Every student of the Old Testament can recall some of the records telling of heavenly visitors coming to earth. For the purpose of better accomplishing their mission of holding converse with the children of men, and influencing them, they took upon themselves, at times, the forms of men. They appeared as men, but were not men. They were angels, or, in some instances, probably, the Son of God Himself. They were purely spiritual beings appearing in the form of human beings.

We must not think after this manner when the manhood of Jesus is under consideration. There were those in the early centuries who thus represented Jesus. It was a common belief in ancient times that human sin had its origin and roots in our flesh and blood. That all matter, in fact, was inherently and necessarily evil. These people held that the chief task of man in this world is to disengage his higher spiritual self from his physical nature. In late Apostolic days there were those who taught this, and still wanted to be Jesus' disciples. Because of their erroneous ideas as to human nature, they could not believe that Jesus had a real human body. St. John probably had these people in mind when he wrote, "hereby know ye the spirit of God; every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God" (1 Jn. 4:2, 3). Other Scripture passages set forth the same truth with equal clearness and emphasis. Jesus Christ did not only appear to be a man, He was a true man, a man of woman born. He had a true body of flesh and blood. There was not a substance or attribute truly belonging to human nature which was lacking in Jesus.

The proof of the genuine humanity of Jesus is so abundant and convincing that there are now few to question it. But occasionally some one reverts to the old error, as does Shelley in his beautiful, but misleading words:

"A mortal shape to Him
Was like the vapor dim,
Which the orient planet animates with light."

To refresh our memories, let us recall a few of the many lines of evidence which affirm the humanity of Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament He is spoken of as "the seed of the woman"; and "the son of man," "like unto his

brethren.” The Christmas story, so indelibly impressed on the minds of all Christians, should place the true humanity of Jesus beyond all question. He was born, so far as the fact of birth is concerned, exactly as other children are born, of a human mother. As a child He was sheltered in Mary’s arms, and nurtured at her breast. He grew to man’s estate as other children do. He received the elements which make for growth and strength as other people do, from the bounties of nature. Jesus grew weary, He hungered; He rested, He ate, and slept as men do. In His body of real flesh and blood a real human soul subsisted. This soul, as do the souls of men, felt the alternate thrill of joy, and the pang of grief. The body of Jesus, as your body and mine, felt the cutting agony of pain, and finally succumbed in death to the assaults of sufferings such as no mortal can endure and live. And when the Godhead which had taken up its permanent union with humanity in the person of Jesus, brought His body victorious from the grave, Jesus said to the affrighted disciples: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.” Let us bear in mind that this was His resurrection body of which Jesus was speaking. It had been made a heavenly body, fit for heaven. And yet He tells the disciples that it was such a body that they could tell by handling that it was a body of flesh and bones. If there was no other declaration concerning Christ’s humanity in the Bible, our text would settle the question of its reality.

This was unquestionably the faith of those most intimately associated with Jesus during His earthly life. Gathered around Jesus there was a circle of intimate relatives, friends, disciples. In the center of this group stood Mary, the Virgin Mother; near to her was Salome, probably her sister; and Salome’s sons, James and John, who, if the previously suggested relationship be correct, were cousins-german to Jesus. All the members of this circle knew how Jesus had grown from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, amid the quiet activities of secluded Nazareth. None of these people ever doubted that Jesus was truly a man. Indeed, just because they were so fully convinced of His manhood some of the circle of natural kindred found it hard to believe in His Divinity.

The humanity of Jesus Christ, then, was not a spectre humanity, it was a real humanity. It was not assumed for a little while, for the achievement of a mere temporary purpose. The human nature taken up into union with the person of the eternal Son of God was permanently assumed. In the words of

our text Jesus asserts the continued reality of His human nature after death and resurrection. Elsewhere He declares that as the Son of man He shall ascend into the heavens, where, as the Son of God, He had ever been. And on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter, speaking under the influence of the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost, declares that the eternal Father had exalted the same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified to His own right hand, to be both Lord and Christ. In heaven, today and forever, the Son of God bears the vesture of a glorified human nature. We have a brother on the throne of heaven.

II. The Son of Man and The Sons of Men

A second point for consideration is the Likeness and the Unlikeness of the Son of Man to the Sons of Men.

The Son of Man, Jesus Christ our Lord, is like us, the sons of men, in that He has a true human nature; a true body of flesh and blood, just as our first parents had before sin came to mar the image of God in which they had been created. This body had all the members of a normal body, all the attributes of a perfect humanity. Jesus was like us in this that in His human body there dwelt a human soul, with all its human affections.

Our Savior's humanity was like ours now in this that it was subject to all the natural weaknesses to which we are subject: to hunger and thirst, to the weariness which makes rest refreshing and enjoyable; to the effects of heat and cold. So truly did Jesus take our nature, and enter into the very circumstances of our life, that He felt the sorrows we feel. He knew the flash of righteous indignation. He was grieved at many of the things which grieve us. He wept bitter tears as we often have to weep them. Jesus knew, as we all know, the distressing pull of temptation. He felt the heartache caused by false friends. He knew the anguish of a pain-racked body. And He knew the emptiness of things, the unutterable darkness, the disconsolate groping of the soul, when the face of the eternal Father had passed into eclipse.

Many of the experiences we have enumerated, indeed, the real burden of them all, came into human life as the result of the ravages of sin. However the mere experience of them is not accompanied by guilt. These natural infirmities Jesus took on Himself, not by constraint, but freely, out of the abounding love He felt for the children of men. He became one with us that,

as the Apostle says, He might be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and approach us as the God who had become our brother. He had to do this so that in reality, and not in seeming, He might become our substitute, and bear our infirmities.

So far as our essential nature is concerned, Christ Jesus had the same humanity we have; but as accidents of our humanity, that is, things which do not belong to our humanity as such, we have a good many things Jesus did not have. Sin did not give us another nature, but it put some things into it which do not rightfully belong there. Many of us have decided personal bodily infirmities, given us by the imperfect formative powers of those by whom we were begotten. All of us have some such imperfections, the result of which is sickness and death. Jesus, being miraculously begotten of a human mother, without a human father, had no such personal imperfections. Many of us, because of faulty knowledge, or imperfect self-control where knowledge exists, have brought various infirmities upon ourselves. Everything of this kind was altogether remote from the holy, perfect humanity of Jesus Christ.

The fundamental difference between Jesus and the children of men is expressed in this that according to His human nature also He was absolutely sinless. The prophets of old foretold that Messiah was to be holy, guiltless of all violence and deceit. And the evangelists, looking back through a vista of years which gave them much of the dispassionateness of historical perspective, unhesitatingly spoke of Him as the One “who knew no sin,” being “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” And even amid the surging passions which swayed the hearts of men as the result of the presence and message of Jesus Himself, He dared to fling out the challenge, “which of you convinceth me of sin?” To this day that challenge has never been successfully met. Indeed, all that men need in order to be convinced that in this respect Jesus is heaven high above all other men is truly to know Him, to live in real fellowship with Him. Thus do we come to know both the likeness and the unlikeness of the Son of man to the sons of men.

III. What The Humanity of Christ Means For Men

Finally, let us consider What the Humanity of Christ, the Son of Man, Means to us the Sons of Men.

The humanity of Jesus prepares the way for a better understanding, on man's part, of God. In a very true sense, we can understand man, ourselves, only when we begin to understand God. On the other hand, God is so high above us, so ineffable in His nature, that we begin to understand Him aright only as we approach Him through the channels which our own nature opens for us. God tells us that He created man in His own image. It therefore necessarily follows that what man is in his best estate is at least a shadow of what God is. Jesus Christ, who came to earth as the express image of the Father, both as to His Divinity and humanity, showed men by the Divine which shone through the human what God is, and by the human which lived in unity with the Divine He showed men again what true humanity is.

In manifold ways the inspired Word emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ, the God-man, is the avenue of approach both to the knowledge of God, and to fellowship with Him. St. John tells us, in the first chapter of His wonderful Gospel, that when the Eternal Word was made flesh we beheld in Him the glory of the only begotten Son of God. And again, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" namely, in His incarnation, and in His incarnate life. Later, in this same book, the Son Himself, the Eternal Word of Truth, unhesitatingly declares: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and again, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Let us by no means ignore the other two persons of the Godhead, the Father and the Holy Ghost. Our great aim, our constant aim, is to be to get rightly to know God. And without knowing the holy Three in One we do not, cannot, know God at all. But if we are eagerly desirous of knowing God, let us put our hand in that of our Elder Brother. As we hear His teachings; as we come to know His character, and make it more and more our own; as we grow in His spirit, we shall more and more be able to visualize the person and character of God.

In Jesus Christ, the God-man, men best learn to know the compassion of God, and obtain their greatest comfort. The heart of man is a bleeding heart. Even when he knows not God, and seems to find pleasure in pursuit of worldly things, there is an emptiness within which often appalls him. He has no staff on which to lean, no anchor to which to tie. And in spite of all that he can do to stifle it, a voice within asserts itself; a voice he often hears

echoing from sky, and land, and sea; a voice telling him that over all there is a Power, a Being, to whom we are all subject. Insistent as is this voice of God in nature, it leaves the nature of God a vague, intangible dream. Revelation as we have it in the Old Testament did much to give clearness to our understanding of God. But it was only when Jesus came, clothed in flesh and blood, that the clearest possible knowledge of God, and the closest possible fellowship with Him, were made possible. In Jesus Christ men were given not only the best possible vision of the holiness of God, but of how greatly the holy God loves unholy men, and would love them back into holiness. In Jesus men were given a vision of the beating heart of God, and every pulsation a yearning for the good of His lost and dying children. Jesus Christ, God made flesh, is the most direct, the most undeniable, the most satisfying proof of the love of God for man. The very veil of Jesus' flesh, while serving to dim the scintillating rays of the light of His Divinity, was the best medium for revealing it, for unveiled it would have blinded mortal eyes.

The humanity of Jesus is the best possible lesson on what true human nature is. By contrasting ourselves with Him we may learn how poor and frail we are. By studying His life we may learn what we may become. It is good that we have such an inspiring ideal at which to look. For when we behold humanity as it is exhibited in many of the men and women around us, we are filled with disgust. And when we study human nature as we find it beneath our own coats, when we recall the ideals we have entertained, but so imperfectly realized; when we think of the thousand resolves we have made looking to betterment, and the thousand failures which have followed, an overwhelming sense of despair comes over us. Jesus inspires us with new hope, and new courage. He shows us the lofty heights to which we may ultimately attain. Not by sudden flight; not by mere self-effort, as so many foolishly dream; but by the way of grace, of forgiveness; and when, cleansed and strengthened by Jesus Himself, we are satisfied earnestly to fight with the weapons He puts in our hands, and slowly to climb laborious heights from which embattled enemies would hurl us down.

Jesus Christ, in His human life, gives us new visions of what the real purpose of our life should be. The prevalent idea of what human life should be is impregnated through and through with selfishness. The usual conception of glory is that the one who dreams of it be seated on some kind of throne around which all others surge to do homage. Happiness is generally

conceived of as a state of luxury, the possession of wealth, and ease, ministered unto by those unable to attain. Jesus, in His own active life, taught the world that the crown of human life is attained when the spirit of brotherly, loving, self-sacrificing service so takes hold of one that all the promptings of ambition, and the cravings for happiness, are satisfied as loving ministry pours out its offering in the service of the needy and suffering.

Finally, brethren, let us remember that as the eternal Son of God had to become man in order to accomplish His work of redeeming the world, so must we, the sons of men, be brought into union with God in order to reach our goal. Christ our Savior, appropriated by faith, must dwell in our hearts. Once, many hundred years ago, the Son of God was born in the flesh. If His work is to be done in us individually He must now be permitted to find a new birth in the heart of each one of us.

“O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, —
Be born in us today.
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.”

16. The God-Man

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. — [St. John 1:13, 14.]

A FEW WEEKS AGO we declared it as our faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, really the Son of God. A little later we confessed, with equal emphasis, that Jesus is truly the Son of man. We are now face to face with a problem. Are there two Christs, one of whom is God, the other man? No, there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, who has been God from all eternity, but became man, and is now God and man in one inseparable person. All the secrets of this mysterious relationship, all that is meant when the Scriptures speak of a person who is, at the same time, both God and man, it is not for mortals to know. But there are certain truths concerning the subject which we can know, and should be at pains to know. Indeed, it is a subject of such supreme importance, with such definite bearing on the plan of salvation, that we should with all earnestness seek every possible ray of light on it. Fully conscious, then, of our limitations, let us make a brief study of the mysterious, but all-glorious, person known as the God-man.

The subject of the God-man presents three leading thoughts for our prayerful consideration: The Son of God before He became man; the Son of God who has become man; and the union of the Divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Son of God Before He Became Man

Two of the synoptic Gospels begin the record of Christ's life with the Christmas story. Then, by recital of heavenly manifestation, by sketching the character of the one born as the Babe of Bethlehem, and by various statements of His, and concerning Him, they conclusively prove that Jesus

was not a mere human babe, not a mere man; but the Christ, the Lord, the very Son of God. The fourth Gospel does not so begin. St. John writes with the specifically stated purpose not only of showing that the Babe of Bethlehem was Christ the Lord, but that He existed from all eternity, as the Son of God. He begins at the beginning. He goes back to the abysmal depths of eternity, and shows that before all worlds the Son of God was.

We are not going into any detailed discussion of the significance of the term “Word” used here as the name for the eternally begotten Son of God. For practical purposes it is sufficiently explained in the eighteenth verse of this chapter. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” By our words we best declare ourselves, our thoughts, our truest inner selves. The Bible is the Word of God, the revelation of His mind and heart. Through it He is still declaring Himself to men. This tells us why the Son of God is called the “Word.” Through Him God was eternally expressing Himself. And the Son came to earth expressly to declare God, to make Him better known to men, to set forth His will, to do His work.

“In the beginning. These three opening words of our text lead us into regions where human mind becomes lost. They are an accommodation to human limitations. We must have a starting point for our thinking. When the Bible starts out with the statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” it refers to the time when the visible world began to exist. But when St. John says “in the beginning” he goes infinitely beyond the beginning of Genesis. But even then he finds no historical starting point for the existence of “The Word”; for at the time he designates as the beginning “The Word” already “was.” Before those all-powerful, creative words were spoken which brought forth the light, the earth, and the heavens peopled with its countless worlds; before all things by which mortals are capable of reckoning; at the time when there was nothing but God and infinite space, then the eternal, uncreated, but begotten, “Word” “was.” Indeed, our text says:

“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Note, not by it, some kind of an impersonal energy; but by “Him,” a self-conscious, personal being. And this being was the Son of God who became our Savior.

The identity of this “Word” is made unmistakable when, in the fourteenth verse, the Apostle says:

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

This is St. John’s way of telling the Christmas story. And he has an all-important purpose in so telling it. He wants the world to know, for its own eternal good, as well as present assurance, that the child born to the fair and virtuous virgin more than nineteen hundred years ago, was not a mere human child, that He was not a mere God-endowed man; that He did not begin His existence, or His career, when He was given, for a time, into the care of the maid of the house and lineage of David; but that He had had an eternal existence before this as the Son of God. This is what we mean when we speak, in theological language, of the pre-incarnate existence of Christ. He did have an existence, a personal existence, before He became a man.

In numerous places besides our text, and in almost every conceivable manner, the Word of God teaches this truth that He whom we worship, and to whom we look alone for salvation, had a personal existence before the date from which the world reckons time. Hundreds of years before His human birth He is called, by the prophet, the everlasting Father, whose goings forth were from of old, even from everlasting. Jesus Himself often asserted the truth of His having existed before He came to earth as the Son of Mary. To the caviling Jews He said: “Before Abraham was,” two thousand years ago, “I am”, the eternally present One. In His great high priestly prayer, He said: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” And whenever Christ’s ascension is spoken of from the point of view of His Divinity, it is regarded simply as a return to the state and condition from which He had come forth when He came to do His Messianic work.

The Son of God Becomes the Son of Man

The time came when the eternal Son of God came down to earth, assumed human nature, was born of a human mother, flesh of her flesh, and lived a real man among men. This act of the Son of God is thus expressed by our

text: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” St. Paul thus voices the same great truth:

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal. 4:4—5.)

But the coming was not an unwilling one on the Son’s part. He could say:

“Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God.)”

And the Apostle exhorts us saying:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5—7).

Here, now, we have the explanation of the oft used word, — incarnation. Carnal means pertaining to the flesh. To incarnate means to clothe in flesh. Incarnation means being clothed in flesh. And the incarnation means that the eternal Son of God came down from heaven, and was clothed in flesh; taking on Himself a body of flesh and blood, yet without sin. And in this form He dwelt among men, and those who allowed the Spirit to give them vision were privileged to see, shining forth in the words and deeds of Jesus, the glory of God.

You remember how, in the days of old, when Israel wandered in the wilderness, God gave them a visible sign of His presence, in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In this form God led them, rested when the people were to rest, moved forward when they were to advance. So Jesus dwelt a God-man among men. He marked man’s way from the cradle to the grave. He hallowed each place of our sojourn. There is nothing in human life so trying that Jesus did not experience it. He asked for no privilege but that of service; to bear the burdens of the weak; to espouse the cause of the oppressed.

“And we beheld His glory.” Not the dazzling glory of power, not the generally envied glory of station and wealth, not the glory of an isolated grandeur; but the appealing glory of unselfish service, which stoops to save.

The glory of the God-man was the glory of grace, of love unmerited, love for the unlovely, faithful service in behalf of the unfaithful. The grace seen in Christ is full sister to truth. It is a grace, not in fancy or fiction, not merely dreamed of, or hoped for; but in reality. Jesus came with a grace which actually pardons every sin for which there is true repentance; a grace which in reality renews every longing, receptive soul; a grace which is the bearer of a salvation which actually saves. The truth of which Jesus Christ was the living embodiment is a truth steeped in love; a truth brought, not from the Judgment-seat, but the Mercy-seat.

This is but a shadow-picture of Jesus Christ as He walked the valley of humiliation; very God, but clothed upon with a human body of flesh and blood. Human utterance is wholly inadequate to paint a picture of Him such as He really was. To the eyes upon which still hung the sin-begotten scales of unbelief Jesus seemed but a Galilean peasant, making claims which proclaimed Him an unbalanced enthusiast. But Saint John, and those like him, saw the glory which no veil sufficed to hide. And multitudes in every age, and in every clime, have learned to see in Him all the goodness, all the beauty, all the glory of God; for He anointed their eyes and gave them sight, and they experienced His salvation.

To what lines of reflection should thoughts like these lead us? Naturally, it seems, to what it cost our Savior to do for us what He did. He, before whom the angelic hosts bowed in love and reverence, came down to bear the insults and taunts of sinners, to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He, by whom all things were made, and to whom all things belong, came to be a child of poverty, with not a place where to lay His head. He to whom, by right, belongs the radiant throne of eternal glory came down to be spit upon, to bear the cross, and be borne by the cross; and to repose His weary, mangled limbs in the dark solitude of the tomb.

And the secret of it all! It is an open secret. Jesus came love-impelled. And where love dwells, enlightened and consecrated, no cost is counted. Indeed, where such love is duty becomes a pleasure; and sacrifice for the one loved, a transport of soul which deadens pain.

And what shall our response be to this love? Oh, that it might be a realization of George MacDonald's words. He recounts the beauties of nature, and art, which he passionately loved, and then cries out:

"But I leave all, O Son of Man,
Put off my shoes, and come to Thee,
Most lovely Thou of all I see,
Most potent Thou of all that can!

"As child forsakes his favorite toy,
His sister's sport, his new-found nest,
And, climbing to his mother's breast,
Enjoys yet more his late-left joy —

"I lose to find. On fair-browed bride
Fair pearls their fairest light afford;
So, gathered round Thy glory, Lord,
All glory else is glorified."

The Union of the Divine and Human Natures in Christ

It is an unquestioned truth of Scripture that the eternal Son of God came down from heaven, and took upon Himself human nature. And He who was born of the Virgin Mary, in Bethlehem, and lived for thirty-odd years among men here on earth, showed beyond question, in both word and deed, that He was both God and man. The mystery we cannot fathom; but with respect to it there are some errors we must be careful to avoid, some helpful truths we should be careful to distinguish, and cherish.

The fact that Jesus Christ is God and man does not mean that He has a double personality. We have one Savior, not two. "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor. 8:9). Again the Apostle explicitly tells us, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). We understand from such passages that when the Son of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, came down from heaven He did not join Himself to a human person, but took on Himself simply a human nature of flesh and blood, with a human soul, drawn from the life of His human mother. That differentiation of attributes which marks people of the same general nature as distinct, and gives them that which we call personality, Jesus did not assume with His human nature. His Godhead gave Him His personality.

From of old there have been errors associated with the doctrine of the personal union, or the coming together of the Divine and human natures in

Christ, against which we should guard ourselves. In the first place, the Son of God did not so take up human nature into His being that it was absorbed into the Divine. Nor did the coming together of the Divine and human in Christ result in a compound, or mixture, of natures which was neither truly human, nor truly Divine; for, during His earthly life, He was still called truly God, and truly man. And it was absolutely essential that He should remain both true God and true man if He was to be really our Savior. In the incarnation the Son of God did not lose an iota of His Godhead, and the humanity of Christ did not lose aught of that which belongs to human nature. For instance, Christ's humanity did not, in itself, or by virtue of any properties now inherent in it, become almighty, or all-knowing.

The Divine nature of Christ remained truly Divine. The human nature, which He assumed into inseparable union with the Divine, remained truly human. Yet there was a union which, while mysterious, was true, real, vital. So real was, and is, that union that there is a wonderful inter-penetration of the properties of the one nature by those of the other. So truly is this the case that frequently in Scripture those works which only God can do are ascribed to the man Christ Jesus. And just as frequently are experiences which can take place only in a human life ascribed to the Son of God. For instance, the prophet calls the Babe of Bethlehem "the mighty God, the everlasting Father." In our text it is said of the Son of Mary that in Him was to be seen the glory of God. Saint John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son (the Son of God) cleanseth us from all sin." Jesus Himself spoke, while on earth, of His being in heaven, even as the Son of Man. On the other hand, the Apostle says, "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," namely, into death (Rom. 8:32). And again, "They crucified the Lord of glory."

How can language such as this be used, or justified? Let us remember that we are dealing with God's inspired Word. God never uses words lightly. These words about Christ appear to be contradictory only to unenlightened human reason. They are perfectly true. And they are so because of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, and the consequent inter-penetration of natures, and the communication of attributes from one nature to the other. Because of this that which can be said of God only, apart from the God-man, can truthfully be said of either nature, or both, when He is the subject of whom we speak. In like manner, that which can be said of man

only, such as becoming hungry and weary, suffering and dying, can be said of God, when He is spoken of in the person of Jesus Christ.

These rather difficult subjects are not presented from a love of dealing with difficulties. They help us to understand the work Christ did for our salvation. It helps us to understand how the Son of God could actually pay the price of our transgression. It throws light on the great question of how the work done by Jesus of Nazareth could have such worth for all the sons of men. Only thus can we begin to grasp the significance of the oft repeated Scripture teaching that we have a brother and friend on the throne of heaven, who is also unfailingly with his brethren here on earth.

Our Catechism thus answers the question as to the necessity of Christ's being both true God and true man:

“True man He must be that He might put Himself under the law, suffer and die for mankind; true God He must be, that He, by such obedience, could merit for us forgiveness of sin, life and salvation.”

Man is subject to the law, but cannot fulfill it. He can suffer the penalties of outraged law, but it would never suffice to pay his own debt, much less the moral debts of all men. God is the law-giver, and cannot be subject to it. He has the worth to pay man's debt of sin, but as God alone He cannot suffer and die, which was the price of payment. By the union of God and man in Jesus Christ, in such manner that the properties of the one nature became the properties of the other, and the attributes of the one nature the attributes of the other, the requirements were met on all sides. God in Christ could endure for man's sins, and the humanity of Christ had the merit fully to cancel the debt.

We join most heartily in the words of the Formula of Concord, as wise as they are apt and forceful:

“We would exhort all devout people not to attempt to scrutinize this deep mystery with the curious search of human reason, but rather with the Apostles of our Lord to exercise a simple faith, closing the eyes of human reason, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. But most sweet, most firm consolation, and perpetual joy may they seek in the truth that our flesh is placed so high, even at the right hand of the majesty of God, and of His almighty power. Thus shall they find abiding consolation in every sorrow, and be kept safe from every hurtful error.”

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness:
False and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace.

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee:
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."

17. The Virgin Birth

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. [St. Matt.] 1:18—25.

LORD'S DAY AFTER LORD'S DAY millions, yes, actually millions, of Christian people publicly confess: "I believe ... in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." From the beginning this has been the faith of the Church. Some, no doubt, have been without a clearly defined understanding of what these words mean. But most of those who make this confession have a fair conception of what it signifies.

In our day these clauses, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," are seriously called into question. There are those who not only want them left out of the creed, but declare that it is a grievous wrong to retain them and insist on their acceptance as an article of faith.

This controversy is known in the Church as the one concerning the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Of this I purpose speaking today.

I. The Denial of the Virgin Birth

Let us first consider the denial of the Virgin Birth, the grounds on which it is based, and the motives prompting it.

Had I attempted earlier in my ministry thus to explain the Creed, I probably would not have considered this subject as a separate topic. I think a few references to it, in connection with the humanity of Jesus, would have satisfied my conception of the need of special emphasis for it. I, of course, knew that in early days a few minor sects, alienated from genuine Christianity, questioned, or denied, the Virgin Birth. I equally well knew that the deists, and rationalists of the 18th century often questioned the doctrine, and sometimes spoke of it with scurrilous indecency. But I felt that such treatment was to be expected from men like Voltaire, Renan, and their ilk. Today this tenet of our faith is boldly and vehemently denied by preachers from Christian pulpits, by professors of theology, as well as by natural scientists, and all kinds of writers of every degree of attainment. In the early centuries the attacks on the Virgin Birth came largely from Jews and pagans. Now they come largely from those nominally within the fold. And my own experience has proven that the poison has penetrated farther than many realize.

Not long ago I was approached, after a funeral service, by a member of the funeral party. The man said, "Reverend, I wish I could make my own the comfort you held out today. But I cannot. It was based on Christ. And I have been taught to believe that He was but a man, born as we are of human parents." Here was a practical result of the denial of the Virgin, or miraculous, birth of Jesus.

The denial of the Virgin Birth means the reduction of Christ Jesus to the practical level of other men. It means that He was born not only of a human mother, but also of a human father. In other words, it is the denial of any miracle in the birth of Jesus. Renan thus baldly and boldly stated the contention of the opposition:

"Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, which before His time had no celebrity. ... His father Joseph and His mother Mary were people in humble circumstances."

Such a statement from the hand of Renan occasions but little surprise. But a noted, still living, London preacher, who, however, it is but proper to state, has renounced most of his radicalism, and re-entered the conservative church, wrote thus, eight or ten years ago:

“The simple and natural conclusion is that Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary, and had an uneventful childhood.”

The ground of objection to the Virgin Birth, briefly stated, is as follows. The record which tells us of such a birth is found in only two of the four Gospels. These two Gospels, as well as the others, speak of Jesus as the son of Joseph and Mary. The preaching of the Apostles, as recorded in Acts, and the Epistles of St. Paul contain no record of this miracle. Nor is it a part of the body of doctrine held and proclaimed by the successors of the Apostles in the early Church. The contention is that the idea of the Virgin Birth was an afterthought, imparted from somewhat analogous pagan myths. Or from a mistaken understanding of Old Testament prophecies. Such, for instance, as this:

“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

At any rate, say these opposers, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is not an essential part of our Christian faith. The New Testament does not base anything on this doctrine. And it is such a mystery, so hard to believe, that consciences should not be burdened with the acceptance of it. And, say they, with great gravity, all the scholars have given up the doctrine of the Virgin Birth long ago. Thus have they shaken the faith of many.

The detailed consideration of these charges we shall take up later. But at this point we must uncover the motive which prompts to the crusade against the Virgin Birth. This motive becomes clearer with every new examination of the evidence. It is nothing less than opposition to everything in Christ's life which is supernatural. The objectors want a Christ who is wholly conformable to natural laws. They do not believe in miracles. And because the Virgin Birth implies a miracle they repudiate it, repudiate it in the face of the best of evidence.

II. What the Virgin Birth Means, and Why We Believe It

Let us now consider what the Virgin Birth means, and why we believe it.

By the doctrine of the Virgin Birth we mean that the mother of Jesus was a virgin, in the true sense of the word, when He was born. Mary was actually the mother of Jesus. So far as the fact of birth is concerned, Jesus was born into the world as all other men are. But the Word of God teaches, and we accordingly believe, that the birth of Jesus was unlike that of all other children in this, that He had no human father. The conception of Jesus was purely a miracle. It was effected solely by the act of God's will, in the person of the Holy Ghost, whose creative energy was as directly and immediately engaged here as it was in the beginning when all things were called forth. It was only after this miracle of conception was wrought that Jesus was born into the world in the natural way.

This is the teaching of God's Word on the subject. In St. Luke, chapter one, we are told of the coming of the angel Gabriel, whose mission it was to make the announcement of the coming birth of Jesus. Thus did he deliver his message:

“Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.”

Mary was not surprised at the Messianic announcement. It was a familiar thought to her, as to all devout Israelites. But how, under the circumstances, it could be fulfilled through her she could not understand. And she exclaims,

“how shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” And the angel answered and said unto her, “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

This is one of the direct Divine records of the conception of our Savior. It is so chastely, so beautifully set forth that, in form as well as substance, it proclaims its heavenly origin, and calls us to our knees in adoration.

Here is a daughter of Eve who is divinely chosen to roll back the reproach, and undo the mischief, wrought by the mother of mankind.

“Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee.” Never before had holy angel so addressed one of the fallen race of men. It was not a mere heavenly courtesy. Heaven does not speak with unmeaning words. They do not proclaim Mary without the taint of sin. But they unquestionably do proclaim her the most immaculate of the daughters of Eve; the best suited, the God-chosen instrument, for the accomplishment of His plans. In a true sense Mary became the mother of God, in the person of Jesus, who was both God’s Son, and hers.

As to the precise manner in which the miracle of the conception, and the consequent Virgin Birth, was brought about God has not seen fit to enlighten us, and concerning it we should not be inquisitive. God’s Word throws around the subject the veil of sacred silence. Let us be reverently silent about it ourselves.

The modern critics, to whom this sacred mystery is an offense, were not the first doubters of the Virgin Birth. Our text tells us of the first doubter. He is none other than Joseph, who afterwards became the husband of Mary. He is the one whom the critics would make a party to what would be, if true, the greatest, the farthest reaching, the most pitiable deception ever perpetrated on the world.

Joseph, by the binding rites of betrothal, had become engaged to Mary, whom our Creed has immortalized as the virgin mother of our Lord. In the course of the passing months Joseph learned of Mary’s condition. Love pure and strong burned in the manly breast of the village carpenter. And when the delicate condition of his betrothed was made known to him, probably from her own lips, he was amazed and grieved beyond the power of expression. And all Mary’s words of explanation, all her protestations of innocence, were unavailing. Joseph was a doubter of the virgin conception. There was but one conclusion he could entertain, the flower of Nazareth had deceived him. Joseph thought he had been betrayed in the most grievous way in which men and women can be unfaithful to each other.

Joseph might have exposed what he considered Mary’s perfidy, and have had her stoned to death. Such was the law of ancient Israel. But the love in his breast, which would not die, restrained him from such a step. But he was determined that the tie which bound him to Mary should be severed. He would quietly get a writ of divorcement, and put her away. God, however, did not forsake his handmaid. An angel, very likely Gabriel, who had brought the announcement to Mary, appeared to Joseph, and said:

“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.”

What a thrill of joy must have filled the heart of this man of God when he heard these words. Not only was the supposed dark stain lifted from his best beloved; but they showed him that he, after Mary, was to be brought into the closest relationship to the fulfillment of the Messianic hopes of Israel. He was to be sheltering husband to the mother of the Lord; and care-taker, during His childhood, of the Lord Christ Himself. Thus were Joseph's doubts most effectually removed, for it is written:

“Then Joseph ... did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son, and he called His name Jesus.”

Modern doubters are not so easily entreated of the Lord as was Joseph. They are determined to get rid of this truth. It is seriously in their way. The admission of this truth necessitates the admission of other truths of which they wish to be rid. But with all their efforts, they are but deluding themselves with the thought that they have gotten rid of it. The records on which the doctrine of the Virgin Birth rest are as well authenticated, as trustworthy, as any other portions of the Gospel. And the fact that Jesus was frequently spoken of, especially by the populace, as the son of Joseph was the most natural thing in the world. They supposed Him to be so. And legally He was so.

As to the claim that, aside from the records in St. Matthew and St. Luke, the Scriptures of the New Testament are silent with respect to the Virgin Birth, it is sufficient to recall that there are other important matters contained in the Gospel record not even so often mentioned. But those who have eyes to see may readily discern that the miraculous birth of Jesus is everywhere understood, and not a few times clearly implied. If it was not known to the other Apostles, and believed by them, and proclaimed by them, how do we account for the fact that the Church everywhere believed this doctrine; and, by the close of the first century, or the early part of the second, incorporated it, in practically the same form in which we have it now, in the Apostles' Creed?

It is equally clear that this doctrine was not interpolated from pagan sources. There were myths which professed to tell of the supernatural origin of certain great men. But nothing which told of one begotten by the Holy Spirit of God; nothing which by its simplicity, its chasteness, so bore the marks of truth as does this Gospel record. Nor is the charge sustained that the story of the Virgin Birth was taken over from Jewish conceptions, derived from prophecies such as that from Isaiah previously quoted, part of which is also used in our text by St. Matthew. The truth of the matter is that while Jewish interpreters had indicated a large number of Old Testament passages as Messianic, this one about the virgin conceiving and bearing a son was not so considered. It was only in the light of fulfillment that the Apostles, by inspiration, were led to understand its true meaning.

In this controversy concerning the Virgin Birth we are contending against the mutilation of God's Word; a mutilation attempted not only without evidence, but against the evidence. And we are contending, not for a minor point, as we should do when it is revealed of God; but for the Christ of the Gospels, without whom we have no Gospel. We are fighting against accepting a Christ who was only a man, when God's Word, and our own great need, tell us that we need a Savior who not only possessed a large measure of the Spirit of God; but who was God Himself.

Denial of the Virgin Birth of Jesus strikes a blow at the precious doctrine of His sinlessness. The sin of our first parents has been perpetuated in every one of the naturally born children of men. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (St. John 3:6). And "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). If Jesus was naturally conceived of a human father, then He stands in the same class with us, whatever charism He may have received afterwards. It was the miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost which made Jesus, as to His human nature, a new creation, the second Adam, qualified by His sinless humanity, as well as by His Divinity, to become the world's Redeemer.

The denial of the Virgin Birth strikes a blow, not only at the sinlessness of Jesus; but at practically all the fundamental doctrines of the person and work of our blessed Redeemer. If this doctrine be not true I know not whether there is anything concerning Him we can believe, or that I would want to believe. If Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary, we have no assurances of His real Divinity. If He is not truly Divine we have no real Sav-

ior, the whole plan of salvation, as the Gospel presents it, falls. But we are not at all alarmed. The truth may be assailed, but can never be destroyed. The truth of the Creed concerning the conception and birth of Jesus still stands, and scarcely shows a mark of the assaults against it. Being a foundation stone in God's plan of salvation it will naturally cause offense, but it is a stone against which all the wisdom, and all the hatred of this world will eventually wear themselves out. Let us not be alarmed. We may still hold up our heads, and join in the confession, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." And in doing so we will still be in the best of company, not only in company with the angels and saints of the long ago; but the great majority of the most learned Christian scholars of today tell us that from the point of view of every angle of the most searching scholarship it stands, not unassailed, but indestructible.

Brethren, everything, the character of the persons involved, the angelic messengers, the ever adorable mystery of the message, the Divine and human issues involved in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth all conspire to urge us to prostrate ourselves before the throne of God in thankfulness for this truth. Here was the putting into concrete form the content of the words of St. John:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In the Virgin conception and birth our loving God was beginning His last active campaign for the destruction of sin, and providing salvation for a lost race. All the joy of redemption hoped for, and realized is contained in this truth. It is the real secret of our Christmas joy, and our Christmas glories.

18. The Lordship Of Jesus Christ

Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — Phil. 2:11.

IN THE COMMON SPEECH AND LITERATURE of Christians there is often but little discrimination shown in the use of the names of our Savior. He is spoken of as Jesus, Christ, or Lord, or by the various combinations of these names, with little regard to the distinctions these names indicate. And we lose much by our carelessness.

Jesus is the human name of the Savior. It designates His manhood, His life of lowly service, His sufferings and death for our salvation, the type and pattern for our living. Christ is our Savior's official name. It indicates the office in the fulfillment of which He, as the God-man, redeemed the world; it reminds us that He was the world's great teacher, and high priest. The name Lord indicates the Savior's oneness with the everlasting Father, His divinity, His absolute sovereignty over all things.

We like the name Jesus. And it is a precious name. Without it we would be hopeless. It tells us about love, and mercy, and condescension for the purpose of rescuing us from sin and death and the power of the devil. The name Christ has an appeal for us. It reminds us of the meeting of God and man in one mysterious person. This name also stands for service on our behalf, service begun in heaven, continued on earth, and resumed again in heaven. But how much do we like the name Lord? We admire the name when it indicates limitless power and authority exerted in our behalf. But where there is a lord there must be subjects. And the more absolute the lordship of the ruler the more complete must be the obedience of the subject. We want Jesus to be just what that name means, we want Him also to be our Christ, do we really want Him to be our Lord, with all this word implies?

This is the point we will consider today. We will take as our subject,

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

We will treat of His original, inherent Lordship; His acquired Lordship; and His actual Lord-ship.

I. Jesus Is Lord Because of His Inherent Nature As God

Jesus Christ is Lord over all things by virtue of His original inherent nature as the eternally begotten Son of God.

Every title of honor, majesty, and sovereignty which makes eternal God Lord of the universe belongs wholly to Jesus Christ also by virtue of the oneness of His Divine nature with the eternal Father. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things, not simply as a prince or noble may rule a province by right of appointment on the part of the reigning sovereign; Jesus is Lord because He is, in the fullest sense of the word, one with the Father. Jesus Christ is Lord, not because He has been given this office, but because He is eternal God in His own right, and in His own nature.

“Jesus Christ ... our Lord.” This is the well grounded confession of every one who repeats the Apostles’ Creed. And it is founded on any number of the clearest statements of God’s Word. Jesus Christ is the world’s law-giver. He has the right to prescribe conduct, to impose penalties, to bestow rewards. He has the right to do this by virtue of His authorship and ownership. “By Him were all things made.” By their very nature, if they were true to it, all things are obligated to bow in submission to Jesus Christ. And to Him will all things finally have to give an account. And there is no more asked of us, oh children of men, than is asked of the angels in heaven.

Christ’s lordship is absolute, not in name only, but in reality. As in the beginning He spoke the word, and what He willed was done, so with a word He could speak this universe back into the nothingness from which it came. With a word he could bring every one of the sons of men into the dust at His feet, as it happened to the vicious band which came to take Him captive on the night of His betrayal. But though Christ Jesus holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, and overrules the general history of the nations so that in the aggregate there is an unceasing coming of the Kingdom of God;

yet, in this life, He does not force any individual to do otherwise than that individual wills to do.

This is the day of grace. This is the day when love and mercy hold the reins of government, and make their appeal to the children of men. Amnesty is now proclaimed to offenders, and full and free pardon to all the contrite. But this day of grace is rapidly passing away. One of these days the world will awake to find that it is gone. Then will be the day of final reckoning. The Lord Jesus, to whom already the angels and authorities and powers have been made subject, will exert His limitless lordship over the children of men. Every knee will have to bow before Him then. Those who have lovingly bowed the knee in the obedience of faith, will do it now to receive upon their brows the fadeless crown. Those who have persistently refused all overtures, despising every offer of mercy, will now have to bow the knee in acknowledgment of Christ's lordship, and have fastened upon them the shackles which will forever doom them to wander, as slaves of their own evil passions, in which they have now been confirmed, in the shades of eternal darkness.

II. Jesus Is Lord Because of His Work

Let us notice, in the second place, that Jesus Christ is "our Lord" in a special sense because of the work which He, in the course of time, has done in our behalf.

Jesus Christ is now the Lord, not only as the Son of God; but as the God-man. He is "our Lord" because He has purchased and won us from all sins, from death and the power of the devil. All men ought to be subjects of Christ the Lord because He has the right to exercise lordship over us by virtue of purchase, the conditions of transfer being duly executed, and the bond thereof properly sealed.

This is the point of view from which Luther treats the whole second article of the creed. He says:

"When asked, what do you believe in the Second Article concerning Jesus Christ? Answer briefly, I believe that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, has become my Lord. And what is meant by becoming Lord? It means that He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death and all misery. For before I had no Lord and King, but was captive under the devil's power. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness."

Man was created a child of God. Because he was made in the image of God, man was given lordship over all earthly creatures. To be a child of God means to exercise lordship. But man sold out his birthright. And he sold it for a mess of pottage. When he sold his birthright as a child of God, he sold his right to lordship, and became a slave, a slave to his own evil passions, a slave to him who implanted, and cultivates, these evil passions — the devil. It was in the beginning, as it has been ever since, man thinks he is gaining freedom when he throws off God's authority. The truth is that he is buying, and at an awful price, the heaviest, and, in the end, the most galling, of chains.

Being "our Lord," if we had been innocently brought under the dominion of Satan, it would have been the duty of God to effect the deliverance of his enslaved children. But we were brought into servitude by fault of our own. And God was under no obligation to secure our release. However, God had a father's love for his children, and a father's interest in them, rebellious and unfilial though they had proven themselves to be. He, accordingly, resolved on their deliverance. And having resolved on this course, to carry it out became an obligation, an obligation which He owed, not to us, but to Himself.

Jesus Christ, the eternally begotten Son of God, the second person of the adorable Trinity, is the One who left the throne of glory, came down to earth to effect our deliverance, and to bind Satan with the chains torn from our own fettered limbs. As the God-man He met the demands of righteousness by taking on Himself the law ordained for man's observance. He paid the demands of outraged justice by suffering the penalty for our transgressions. The enemy's power over man was broken. The gates of our prison were thrown open for our escape. The doors of the Father's house were opened for our entrance.

Thus did Jesus Christ become Lord in a double sense. Eternally He was Lord because He was God, because all things were His created subjects, because of the absoluteness of His power over all things. In the fullness of time He became our Lord in still this other sense; by espousing our cause, by defeating our enemies, and making it possible for us to escape from our bondage.

III. Is Jesus Actually Your Lord?

Finally; let us ask ourselves individually, and with all sincerity, the question, is Jesus Christ actually “my Lord?”

It may be asked, does it not follow that if Christ Jesus has broken Satan’s power over man, if our debt has been fully paid, and all our obligations met, that we are free? that Christ Jesus is our Lord? This is by no means the conclusion which necessarily follows. Suppose that somewhere a disaffected, and disloyal province was set upon by the ruler of an enemy country, driven into a trap, and threatened with destruction. Suppose the rightful sovereign of these people went to their assistance with an effective force, beat off their enemies, and said: See what I have done for you, I will forgive your past disloyalty, be again my loyal subjects, enjoy my favor. You see what dangers threaten you. Come back into allegiance, enjoy the peace and plenty which my government assures. These people would be foolish in doing so, but they could continue to be not only disloyal but ungrateful. They could say, we did not ask for your assistance; we are able to take care of ourselves; and if it comes to an issue, we would rather be this other king’s subjects than yours.

This gives us an illustration of the situation as it exists between man and God, between man and Christ Jesus. He is Lord by a double right. He is going to be Lord eternally. And the time is going to come when, in fear and trembling, all men will have to own His Lordship. And yet He may not be “our Lord” in the sense in which the words are used in the Apostles’ Creed. Let us, then, see what it means when we here confess Jesus Christ to be “Our Lord.”

For a man to be able to say that Jesus Christ is his Lord means not only that He is recognized to be truly the Son of God as well as the Son of man; but it means also the unreserved acceptance, in true faith, of Jesus Christ as his deliverer from sin and death and devil. In the sense of this article Jesus Christ is not the Lord of any person who is trusting for salvation in anything save Christ alone. The work-righteous man, who is trusting in his own goodness, in his own efforts, for salvation, cannot truly say — Jesus Christ is “my Lord.” It is simply not true. He is trying to be his own lord.

These two little words “my Lord” mean still more than this that we look to Jesus for our salvation. They mean a great deal more than most of us have rightly learned. Let us remember that lordship means ownership. Is Jesus our Lord? If so it means that we recognize His right to direct and control our lives. It means that our will is surrender to His will, that our whole

life is put at His disposal, that all that we have is held subject to His orders, that we hold nothing too dear to give back to Him at His request.

How often, oh, how often, Jesus Christ is not allowed to come into full Lordship in our lives. How often we are self-willed. How often some chamber, or chambers, of our hearts are kept closed against Him. We complain of His dealings with us. We doubt His love, His care; though it is written, and all experience proves, that as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, and maketh all things work for their good. Let us take Jesus as our Lord in the fullest sense of the Word.

"All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

"Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all.

"O that with yonder sacred throng,
We at His feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."

19. The Price Of Our Redemption

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. — Phil. 2:5—8.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD [God] is upon me; because the [Lord] hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the [Lord], and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the [Lord], that he might be glorified. — [Isa. 61:1—3.]

We have been considering truths of the Second Article of the creed for a number of Sundays. To the present time, with the exception of the last one which, in a general way, looked forward to what is now to follow, all of our subjects dealt with the person of Christ. Some assert, and more act on the principle, that there is little profit in the study of such truths. Doctrine with many is in disfavor. They regard it as speculation. It may be abused in this way. But no one who knows God's Word, and thinks but a little, can fail to see the importance of knowing who Jesus Christ is. If it was not important to know these truths God would not have gone to the trouble of revealing them to us. "All Scripture is profitable." And no Scripture is more profitable than that which tells us what the nature is of our Lord and Savior. That part of the truth concerning the person of Jesus which tells us that He is the Son of the living God, as you will remember, He makes to be the very bedrock of the foundation on which stands the imperishable Church of God.

To consider the work of Christ, whether it be the work which makes a Church possible, or His work in the building of the Church itself, without considering first His qualifications for this work, would be to hang a structure in the air, without a supporting foundation.

Our subject last Sunday dealt with the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In a general way only, we showed how He, the God-man, became our Lord, — by redeeming us. This brings us to the second general division of the second article, the office or work of Christ. Remembering that He was both God and man in one indivisible person, we are prepared to appreciate what He has done for us. We will consider, then, today

The Price of Our Redemption

I. Our Lord's Life of Humility and Service

The Price of Our Redemption was, in part, the life of Humility and lowly Service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is full of direct statements concerning Christ's humiliation, and of references to it; but nowhere is it more clearly, or emphatically, set forth than in the words of our text. It tells us how He, who was in the form of God, and on whose part it was no presumption to claim equality with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

There are men who have princely office. And not a few of them strut and plume themselves because of it; forgetting that kings are to be servants to their brethren. Jesus Christ, when He became a man, though He was the branch of the royal line of noble David, assumed none of the ordinary airs of royalty. He humbled Himself. He bared His shoulders to be a burden-bearer, the world's burden-bearer. He was obedient to the call of every needed form of service, even to that of death upon the cross.

The humiliation of Christ was not in the act of becoming man. That would be equivalent to saying that it was His Divine nature which was humiliated, which is not possible; for eternal God changeth not. That the eternal Son of God consented to unite Himself to a human nature was, indeed, a gracious act of loving condescension. But the humiliation consisted in this that as the God-man Jesus Christ did not, ordinarily, use the divine power

and glory which was His. Because of the perfect union of the Divine and human natures in the oneness of His person Jesus Christ was entitled to use the attributes and prerogatives of Divinity also according to His human nature. But ordinarily He refrained from doing so during the days of His earthly ministry. This constituted His humiliation.

Remember, brethren, that the child born of the Virgin, and cradled in the manger, was the Son of God; remember that the child carried in the arms of a mother in flight from a jealous, cruel provincial king was the Son of God; remember that the youth reared in that humble Nazareth home, and by the bench of the village carpenter, was the Son of God; remember that the young man who walked the hills and dales of old Palestine, teaching in the Synagogues, pleading with publicans and sinners, mocked and persecuted by the leaders of the people, was the Son of God; remember that the scene on the mount of transfiguration, where the transcendent brightness of the person of Jesus, a brightness exceeding the brightness of even an eastern sun, was but the natural shining forth of that which belonged to Him also according to His human nature; remember the scene at the entrance of Gethsemane, where the steady, piercing gaze of Jesus' eye, and the simple, but penetrating, words of His lips, struck to the ground His most conscienceless enemies; remember these things, and you have a conception of what the Bible means when it speaks of Christ's humiliation.

Jesus did not cease to be God during the days of His earthly ministry. Being in the form of God, even during His earthly sojourn, it would have been no robbery to have shown forth His Godhead. But ordinarily He hid His Divine power and glory. Modestly, we might almost say by stealth, He used, as occasion demanded, the Divine attributes which were His constantly, and might have been used constantly.

You have read of kings who were really interested in finding out the true condition of their subjects. To accomplish this they doffed their royal raiment, put on peasant's dress, and lived for a while among their people, sharing their humble fare. They were none the less kings while doing this than when they sat upon the throne. Indeed, when their motives were unselfish, they were never quite so kingly as when thus humbly but lovingly engaged. The King of kings is the One who left the Throne of thrones, and put on, not only the peasants' dress, but the peasants' very nature of flesh and blood, and shared all man's experiences, sin alone excepted. And its curse He felt to the full extent.

What a conquest Jesus could have made had He allowed but a centesim of His power and glory to have shown forth in His earthly life. How gloriously He could have reigned. The powers of earth would have fawned at His feet. The wealth and honor of earth would have been at His disposal. No opposition could have stood in His way for a moment. The nations would have flocked to His standard. But so doing He would not have made the conquest He wanted to make, came into the world to make. The world would then have been unredeemed. He would then have had adulation, but not the homage of blood bought, blood washed, believing souls. He could have had an army here on earth, but He would never have brought an army of saints into heaven.

This latter was the very purpose for which He came down from heaven. It was to open the way back to heaven for all who would walk that way with Him, the thorny but heaven-kissed way of faith and loving service. So He hid the glory away in His own great spotless soul, and girded Himself to minister to the needs of mankind.

Let us think of what it must have meant for Jesus to live among men as He did. It was not the work He did considered merely as a work that was the burden. There is a dignity, a source of inspiration, an endless joy which big-souled people find in any kind of work, especially the kind which bears fruitage for good in the lives of others. Christ's burden came from His own personal experience of the spiritual deadness, the narrow, parched, selfish, seared lives of those among whom He lived, and for whom He worked. We can imagine something of the feelings of overpowering disgust which would flood, like a spring freshet, the whole being of a person of culture and refined sensibilities, whose whole life had been spent amid healthful, congenial surroundings, if they were forced, for a season, to live in the filth and coarseness which exists in some of the human sties which abound. But no extremes of human life can be compared to the contrast between Christ's life as it was in its own nature, and what He had to experience when He became our substitute, and the frailties and sins of the whole human family became His own daily personal experience.

And every step that Jesus took in His earthly Divine-human experience was part of the price He was paying for our redemption. From the very beginning He was the Lamb of God on whom was laid the sins of the world. Man's cause was thoroughly, personally His own. Their needs, their utmost distress, was His own. Early in Jesus' ministry, when He cast out the evil

spirits, and healed the sick, the evangelist, to whom had been given the inner secrets of the Master's life, declared that it was in fulfillment of the prophetic word:

“Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sickness” (St. Matt. 8:17).

Before Jesus ever came to Calvary He was the bearer of the cross. Before ever the nails were driven through His hands He was being crucified.

What reflections these thoughts ought to awake in us. What gratitude, what thankfulness they ought to call forth. What applications to our lives they suggest. All this sacrifice Jesus our Lord, the Son of God, made for us. What sacrifices are we willing to make for Him? Yea, what sacrifices are we willing to make that Christ's work may be done in us? What have we really given up for Christ's sake? how much of pride? of our own wills? How many burdens have we helped to carry, on how many errands have we gone, just for His dear sake? We can never repay the least of the price Jesus paid for us; but it ought to awake some gratitude, it ought to prompt to some thanksgiving, it ought to lead to some effort on our part to pass the blessings on to others.

II. Christ's Active Ministry

A Distinctive Part of the Price of Our Redemption Was Further, Christ's Active Ministry as Prophet, or Teacher of the Way of Salvation.

Christ's work as the world's distinctive prophet is embraced in what we have said of His life of lowly, loving service; but it deserves a special emphasis.

Early in Israel's history it was made known to them that the promised Messiah was to be a prophet, raised up from among His brethren, who was to speak to them all which God commanded Him to speak. And in the words of our text, the prophet, who speaks for the Messiah, sets forth in glowing, comforting words the character and blessed result of Christ's teaching office.

When Jesus entered on His active ministry He was soon recognized as the long promised prophet. You remember how early in His ministry when cautious Nicodemus came to Him by night, he did not hesitate to say,

“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2).

After many of Christ’s miraculous manifestations of power and wisdom, the people either exclaimed, “Of a truth this is the prophet,” or questioned whether He might not be the promised prophet. And on that first Easter night, downhearted, discouraged, hopeless as were the disciples in view of what had befallen Christ, they still stoutly affirmed, He “was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19).

Who and what were the prophets of old? They were humble, earnest, active men. They were the watchmen whom God placed on the towers of His embattled fortress. They were God’s messengers, endued with His enlightening Spirit, sent forth to proclaim such message as God gave to them. They had to await God’s pleasure as to speech and action. And it is questionable whether they themselves always understood the full import of the messages they were given to deliver. How different was Christ as a prophet. He was the center of all that the mere human prophets had spoken. They told of a light, He was that Light. They were glimmering candles, He was the noon-day sun. The prophets before Jesus often spoke with warm and convincing power. Of Jesus it was said, never man spoke before as He spake.

The prophets of old were preachers of righteousness, especially in times of indifference. They held up the demands of God’s Law. They denounced sin. They pictured in fiery eloquence God’s wrath against it, and pressed home in telling terms the consequences of sin unrepented of, and unpardoned. And then they came with God’s offer of forgiveness for all the truly penitent. They told of His desire for reconciliation, of the loving favor with which He would receive every one who came with penitence, confession, and faith. Turn ye, turn ye, from your wicked way, why will ye die? As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. This was the burden of the old prophets’ message.

How superlatively great was Jesus Christ as a prophet in this sense. How He did preach righteousness, by precept and example. How transcendently beautiful and attractive He makes it appear. In contrast with His words and His life, how black, how devilish sin appears. Though personified love, Jesus depicted in withering, scorching terms the wrath of God against sin, and

the absolute impossibility of any human being, by any devices of his own, escaping it. But all of this is but the surgeon's knife, wounding because it is the only way to restore to health.

It is as the prophet of love, of mercy, of forgiveness, of blessedness that Jesus stands preeminent. The prophets of Israel mostly revealed a decided strain of severity. Their message was often predominately denunciatory. They at times impress us as if they spoke rather reluctantly any message of love, pardon, and peace. Occasionally a man like the great Gospel prophet, Isaiah, caught the vision, and breathed more of the Spirit of Divine love. And it was all because he had clearer vision of the nature and mission of Jesus Christ.

How dear to the heart of a sorrowing world is the picture of the teaching, preaching, ministering Christ. He was sent to preach good tidings, and what is life without it? He came to bind up the broken hearted, and how intolerable would be our misery without His alleviation? He came to give hope to the hopeless; to open the eyes of the spiritually blind; to speak the words which will stay the storms which rage and tear through our poor souls, and give in their place the spring-tide calm and reviving life.

What a prophet was Jesus! How eager to impart His message! And what was the heart of that message? The message of redemption, the fact that He was the world's Redeemer, that He had come to reconcile all the world unto God by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. This was the lowest rung of the ladder to which the Son of God descended in stooping to save mankind. In another sense, it was the highest reach of self-sacrificing love. Without it all else would have been in vain.

On Christ's office as prophet and teacher rests the office of the Gospel ministry. Indeed, in the highest sense, the Gospel ministry is but a continuation of Christ's prophetic office. He does His work, proclaims His truth, through the messengers who are faithful to Him. Jesus said to his immediate successors,

"As my Father hath sent me, so send I you."

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

And the great Apostle Paul, including all his co-laborers in the blessed work of preaching the Gospel, declares:

“We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” In reality, then, our blessed Savior is still working among us as a prophet. Of every true preacher of the Gospel He says, “He that heareth you heareth me.”

Oh thou prophet of all prophets, touch our stammering tongues that we may all speak for Thee, and of Thee, as we should. And wherever the message of Divine truth is proclaimed, do Thou accompany it, and make the deaf to hear.

20. The Price Of Our Redemption

Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. — 1 [Pet.] 1:18, 19.

LAST SUNDAY we began considering our Savior's redemptive work. We heard how He, for a time, gave up the glories of heaven, condescended to become a man, a brother of ours, sharing our state. While engaged in this work here on earth, He lived humbly, ordinarily hiding His inherent, Divine glory. He spent His time in serving the children of men. He experienced all of man's difficulties and sorrows. By word and deed He was engaged in teaching men the mysteries of the way of salvation.

We should never forget that Christ's whole perfect, loving, self-sacrificing life, as it was spent here on earth, was spent in seeking our good. All of it was part of the redemptive process, the redemptive price. Without this life of service our redemption could not have been accomplished. But by this life of active service alone we were not redeemed. There was an awful price which had to be paid as a penalty for human transgression; a price which an eternity of woe on the part of every human being would not suffice to wipe out. For man to go free this price also had to be paid. And only that which was the equivalent of the death and eternal punishment of all the children of men could pay the debt. Only Jesus, the God-man, could pay the price, and pay it He did. Hence, for a second time, we take as our subject

The Price of Our Redemption

I. The Curse

Though our aim is to give emphasis to the price of our redemption, we will be better able to appreciate this if we first consider, the curse from which we were redeemed.

The Creed itself, being the briefest possible summary of the Christian faith, does not state, in detail, from what we have been redeemed. It simply states that Jesus Christ our Lord suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. It does not explain why. The explanation of these words goes somewhat more into detail. It says that "Jesus Christ ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and the power of the devil."

"Purchased and won me from all sin!" In former days, when slavery was an institution of our land, occasionally some friend of the cause of human liberty, or of some particular slave, would pay to the slave's master the price of his liberty. This meant that the slave ceased to be a slave. He became a free man. The rights of citizenship were his. He no longer needed to fear the slave-driver's lash, or heed his commands. Can the words, "Purchased and won me from all sin" have a meaning anything like this? Is there not sin all around us? Does it not rule largely in the world? Do not even the best of Christians often feel the shackles, and the lash, of sin? All this is true, sadly true. Indeed, it takes a lifetime of training in the school of the Holy Spirit, of fellowship with Christ Jesus, to get the best of us to have a faint understanding of the true nature, the cancerous, corroding, death-dealing nature, of sin, and the hold it still has on all of us; and to be truly humble on account of it.

And yet, thank God, it is true that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from all sin. All that God could possibly demand of us because of our sin Christ has paid. Whether they be sins of deepest scarlet hue, or what we are prone to call the little sins, Jesus has atoned for them all; He has paid for each one of them severally, paid for all of them collectively. And if we have truly taken Jesus Himself to be our Savior, then we are forgiven, daily and richly forgiven, all our sins. Nothing is held against us. Not only have we been relieved of the guilt of sin, but we have been clothed in the spotless robe of Christ's own perfect righteousness. God looks at us through the merit of Christ.

Jesus, however, has not only made it possible for us to be forgiven. This we will need as long as we live in this world. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8). These

words apply to any and every human being in this world. But every true, earnest Christian may, by the appropriation of Christ, continue, as long as he lives in this world, to make progress in overcoming the power of sin in his life, and of living more and more like Christ, who is our pattern. Finally, death is the purifying fire which purges away the remnants of sin from our being, and prepares the way for our awaking in the perfect likeness of Christ.

It is only by instituting comparisons, not to our own glorification; but to the glorification of God's gracious, loving help, that we come to realize the degree of deliverance from the power of sin which God has wrought in those who are truly his children. And this comparison should be made not only by singling out the conspicuous saints, and the conspicuous sinners; but also by comparing the lives of men generally where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, loved, and lived, with the lives of men in heathen lands where the Gospel is unknown, where sin reigns unchecked by the light and power of saving grace.

If there is little progress in saintliness on the part of the professing children of God, the fault lies not in the remedy provided, but in themselves. It is because they lack earnestness in applying the remedy, it is because they are giving their strength to other things.

Jesus, we are further told, purchased and won us from death. Won us from death? Does not death reign all around us? Do not all men have to die? Do not men everywhere fear death? Shudder at the thought of it? Try to escape it just as long as possible? Is this not largely true of even Christian people? All this is very true. All men still have to die, so far as the body is concerned. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. And he is destroyed only in the act of destroying. The child of God is enabled to exclaim, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Let us not forget that the death of the body is the least we have to fear. This is only a consequence. The worst death of all was when man died spiritually, to the life which is in God; when life became a parched, seared and shriveled thing, fearful and hopeless. Out of this condition come all our ills, and the final dissolution of our earthly frame. And the end, unless deliverance comes, is eternal darkness and woe. This the Scriptures call eternal death. This especially is what is meant when it is said that Christ purchased and won us from death. He came to lay His omnipotent hand on our palsied spirits, and say, "Arise, and walk." He came to breathe into us anew the

breath of life, the power of an endless, blessed life. When this has been done the real death has been banished from human life. Jesus Christ is, to all who receive Him, the death of death. And those who really know and appreciate this are freed from the sting of physical death.

For even the Christian the death of the body remains. It remains as a reminder of the ravages of sin. It is the last evidence of the justice of God. It is the last touch of the purifying fire. And most Christians are unable to shake off altogether a certain dread of its experience. But when the Prince of life, who Himself experienced the double death for us, stands by the side of his dying saints, and holds their enfeebled hands; when they know that the angels of God are in waiting to bear their released spirits to the abode of the blessed, then death is no longer the king of terrors. Indeed, then death itself is made to wear the livery of an angel of light, for it must do God's bidding. Then death itself is made to unlock the portal which opens inward to the Paradise of God, where flows the river of eternal life. This is the blessed purchase of Christ's redemption.

I believe that Jesus Christ has purchased and won me from the power of the devil. The line of thought in the explanation of the Second Article runs from effect to cause, — sin, death, devil. The devil was the original great deceiver. He brought about the spiritual death of man. Sin is the result of a spiritually dead soul. And sin, unhindered, uncured, results in eternal spiritual deadness, to which state the death of the body is the way of entrance. Before we can be delivered from sin and death the power of Him who brought all this on us must be broken. This Christ Jesus has done.

To speak of the devil is to provoke a smile on the part of not a few. Disbelief in God is not the only kind of unbelief extant. Many do not believe in a personal devil. He rejoices in all unbelief, especially in this. It lures men to sleep. It makes them careless.

No devil! How, then, do we account for the devilry which abounds? If there is no devil then the evil ascribed to him always existed, or originated without a cause, or God Himself turned the good of which He is the author into evil. These conclusions are all unthinkable. As in all other things, so here we believe the teachings of God's Word; the statements of which, on this point, are in harmony with the conclusions of philosophic minds of all ages; namely, that there is a personal evil being who is the originating cause, and the sustaining source of strength, of all the forces of evil.

Jesus Christ came to break the devil's power, to undo his work. And He has completed His task perfectly. The devil's lordship over man has been broken, his claims nullified. The devil can say to no man, you are mine, I have a right to you. We are all the Lord's purchased possession. And all the combined force of the princes of darkness cannot hold one soul in thralldom against that soul's will, after Jesus Christ has laid on him His life-giving touch. The devil can keep only those who are satisfied to be under his dominion. He may, and does, for such liberty is yet allowed him, vex and grieve the children of God. This is part of our discipline; but when his worst has been done, his snares and stumbling blocks become the stepping stones whereby God's saints, by the helping hand of God, come into richer blessings, and closer fellowship with Christ. They may be, oft are, sore pressed, wounded, and blood-drenched; but saved and blest, forever victorious.

Redeemed from the devil's power! Does this not seem a strange declaration in view of existing circumstances? Is there a saved soul which is not sorely grieved at the evidences of Satanic power operating all around us? Is there a child of God who does not blush, and weep at heart, from the inner consciousness of the power which the devil still finds means of exerting in his own life? Not one! And yet, who can measure the degree of deliverance which we are already enjoying? Not only have we been delivered from the final consequences of the devil's deadly work, but from many of the present consequences as well. Let us place ourselves, in thought, in the environment of a people wholly in spiritual darkness; where the devil reigns undisturbed in his fiendish task of blinding and destroying souls. Pessimistic as we sometimes feel with respect to the conditions under which we live, that is another world. Death in all its varied forms, in all its ghastliness, reigns there supreme. When the Holy Spirit, through God's Word, has revealed the devil's tyranny, and led men to cry for deliverance; where the Gospel of the crucified Christ has loosened Satan's hold, and brought deliverance from his throttling grip, it is another world in which they live, — a world in which they are blessed with light and hope, with growing liberty, and increasing life. Thank God, we know that Satan's power is broken.

II. The Payment

Having considered the curse from which we have been redeemed, we will be better able to appreciate the final step in the payment of the price of our redemption.

As we have seen, the curse from which we have been redeemed was the triple panoplied evils of sin, death and devil. As Atlas of old was supposed to stagger under the burden of the whole earth, so each one of the natural born children of men staggers under the burden, the multiplied burdens, begotten and nurtured by this curse. The streams of tears and blood which have watered the earth, the heartaches, the agonized groans, which fill the earth with their discord, these and all else that mar the life of mortal man, are the legitimate fruits of the reign of sin, death, and the devil. This is the explanation of the altars which have filled every nook and corner of the inhabited earth, from the time of far off Cain and Abel to the present day. It is the secret of Israel's many sacrifices. It accounts for the weird, strenuous, and oftentimes bloody efforts which many of the benighted children of men, in many parts of the world, are putting forth today. But none of these sacrifices were of a nature, in themselves, to remove the curse, and set the shackled spirit free. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin" (Heb. 10:4). None of the fastings, pilgrimages, or tortures of the flesh could take away the gnawing consciousness of guilt. The sacrifices and services of the unenlightened were prompted by the craving for pardon and peace; it was all a feeling after God, if happily they might find Him. When these services were divinely instituted, as among the Hebrews, their purpose was to serve as reminders of sin, and to keep alive the memory of God's promised mercies, to be fulfilled in the Messianic redemption.

All the altars in all the world were but types and prophecies of that one upright altar erected on Calvary's brow, the cross of Jesus. All the sacrifices ever offered were either prophecies, or perversions of that one costly, all-sufficient, heaven-provided sacrifice for the sins of humanity, — the maimed and bleeding Lamb of God.

Jesus Christ was, in the fullest sense of the word, the spotless Lamb of God. He never did any sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. It was love which brought Him down from heaven for the very purpose of becoming our substitute. As such all the obligations resting on all men were laid on Him. He met them, fulfilled them to the letter, thus providing a righteousness for us which satisfies God when we make it ours by faith. But

more is required than this. Man has transgressed in many respects. He has accumulated guilt resting on him. And he can never pay the damning debt. So all man's guilt was laid on Jesus. Because of this He did not stand before God as the ordinary poor sinner, who, because of his misery, touches the sympathetic heart of God, and receives offers of grace and mercy. Jesus, having taken on Himself the sinner's sins, was not regarded as a poor, weak sinner; but as sin itself. "He was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). And for sin, as sin, there can be neither grace nor mercy — nothing but punishment. So it came that there was poured out on Jesus the full content of the vials of God's wrath.

On the cross, by His sufferings and death, Jesus paid the price which effectually redeemed the world from sin, death and devil. Jesus was the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. And on Calvary's cross the Lamb of God was slain to atone for these sins. There are various theories explanatory of Christ's sufferings and death, this is the only one in accord with the teachings of God's Word, the only one which brings any comfort.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament did not in themselves take away sins. They did not make those who offered them perfect. They did not bring the actual blessing. They were only types, prophecies, reminders. This accounts for their repetition year after year. Nor has there ever been in all the world anything of sufficient worth to take away the sin of a single individual, not to say of all men. Jesus Christ Himself, who owns the universe, could not pass that over in payment for man's sins. He redeemed us, not with silver and gold, this currency does not pass at the court where moral guilt is adjudicated; but with His own precious blood, His innocent sufferings and death. We do not want to set limits to Divine wisdom and power. Nor do we care to discuss at any length the bootless question whether God could not have found some other way of redeeming the world; but when we consider the relation of the Father to the Son, and remember that God always follows the one logical way of accomplishing His purposes, the way, not of ease, but of righteousness and efficacy of means to desired ends, we are forced, I think, to the conclusion that the way of the cross was the one way open to God for saving his lost children.

We need not trouble ourselves, however, about problems too deep for human fathoming. Let us be satisfied to know, to know on the assurance of God's own unimpeachable word, that we are redeemed. Our debt, the debt of each human being, having lived, or to live, has been paid; paid to the last

infinitesimal requirement. “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4—5). And this Old Testament prophecy is fully corroborated by New Testament teaching. God “hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus “was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

Reason, unenlightened by the touch of the Holy Spirit, balks at this teaching. It advances not a few arguments against it. And we grant that, according to earth-bound, and sin-blinded ways of thinking, some of them have some force. But viewed thus much of the Bible is not logical. Especially is Christ not logical, His work is not logical. The cross of Christ has ever been, and ever will be, to the unspiritually minded an offense; but to the believer in an inspired revelation the cross is the climax of the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Prostrate before Thy throne, O Father of mercies, we adore the mystery of wisdom and love which conceived and executed the wondrous plan of redemption. And with gratitude too great for formulation in human language we thank Thee for it, and for the liberation, peace and blessedness of which it has made us the possessors.

21. The Saviour Dead And Buried

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. — John 19:30—42.

THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH of our Savior, as an historical fact, and as an article of faith, is a part of the Gospel record with which well versed Christians are familiar. The story of His birth makes its strong, many-sided appeal to all, in a way especially to the young. But especially in those portions of the Church where the great doctrines of sin and atonement are properly emphasized; and where the Lenten season is observed, the passion history, the story of Gethsemane, the betrayal, the palaces of judgment, the weary, cross-laden way, and finally the cross-crowned hill of death, are events just as vividly imaged in the minds of well informed, thinking Christians as is the manger. And it should not be otherwise. The manger, and the cross and grave are the two ends of the journey the God-man had to take to make salvation possible for the children of men.

Last Sunday we concluded our consideration of the subject of Christ's suffering as the necessary completion of the price He had to pay in order effectually to redeem us. There are still some profitable lessons we may learn by studying this scene from a somewhat different angle of vision. Not forgetful of the fact that the cross represents the crowning, concluding part of the price of our redemption, we will give special attention today to some thoughts suggested by the two words of the Creed — "dead and buried."

The Prince of Life Dead Upon the Cross

As we look back through the intervening centuries, and behold, with strangely moved hearts, and eyes not far removed from tears, that mutilated body, that marred visage, hanging limp in the embrace of death, one of our first thoughts should be, this is the measure of God's love for us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his for his friends" (John 15:13). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And of Jesus it is said, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). Yes, to the end we are contemplating today, to the death of violence and shame on the cruel cross.

And the incomprehensible height and breadth of the love to which the cross is the mutely eloquent witness is enhanced manyfold when we remember that the agony of those last hours, ensuing in death, was not an experience forced on Jesus by a series of unavoidable circumstances. It was love's willingly assumed sacrifice. "The Son of man came ... to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The Son of God chose to be born of the Virgin; He chose to be our substitute, to fulfill all righteousness for us; the Son of God chose to suffer and die for us. Read again the wonderful good shepherd chapter (John 10), and notice the recurrence of such expressions as these:

"The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep,"

"I lay down my life for the sheep,"

"No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself."

There was no necessity from without laid on Christ. There is no power outside of Christ capable of coercing Him to do anything against His own will. Jesus died on the cross because He chose to do so. And He chose to die for men because He loved them, and this was the only way to save them.

In order fully to appreciate the lights and shadows of the cross, we must remember that He who hung on the cross was not merely an unusually good friend, who was paying the price for espousing his friend's cause against powerful enemies. No, the one dead on the cross is the veritable Son of God. Is it not blasphemous to combine the concepts represented by the words God and death in one subject? No, this is God's own truth. It was the God-man who hung dead on the cross. God, as God, did not die, cannot die. But the personal union between the Divine and human in Jesus Christ did not cease when He died. The Divine nature was truly united with the soul which took its flight from the mortal body on the cross. And the Divine nature was truly united with the poor, mutilated body which hung on the cross. Were this not true there could be no atonement. In view of these truths we say, because the Scriptures say, that the Son of God died for us. We are awed by the thought. We are awed by the thought that God would do so much for us. What are we, poor, sin-defiled creatures, that Thou, oh Son of God shouldst stoop so far to help us? We are awed by the thought of the responsibility this act of Christ places upon us. We are awed by its incomprehensibility. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

We must not fail to hold fast to the truth that Christ's death was a real death. It was not merely the semblance of death, from which He afterwards revived; much less was it a feigned death. The faith of the Church, based on the unmistakable teaching of God's Word, is that Christ really died for our sins. All four of the evangelists say, "He gave up the ghost," that is, His spirit, or life, departed from His body. When the soldiers went out to hurry the death of those crucified by breaking their limbs, they found Jesus dead already. But one of the soldiers, from a wanton spirit, not knowing that he was thereby fulfilling Scripture prophecy, thrust a spear into the Savior's side. This in itself would probably have caused death, but the mingled blood and water which flowed from the ghastly wound was evidence that death had already taken place. Yes, the God-man really died for us, as He had truly lived for us.

The Savior of the world was really dead. He who was the author of life hung lifeless on the accursed tree, amid those who, for destroying life, were, as a people, to be destroyed. Those eyes which had looked out so lovingly on a world of sorrow, and shed so many tears of sympathy, were closed in the last earthly sleep of the mortal body. Those lips from which had flown such streams of quickening, healing wisdom were silent, blanched and set. The hands which had dispensed so many blessings were cold as the nails by which they were pierced. The feet which knew so much weariness in the service of love and mercy no longer sought freedom from the transfixing iron. Thus did men repay the love of God. Thus was the old loveless earth given its highest example of love. And thus was love given a new birth in the earth.

In the very hour of His death God did not leave His Son without loving witness of His approval and vindication. The conflict of emotions which burned in the breasts of men at this time led to the proclamation that Jesus the crucified was King, at least king of the Jews. The veiled sun, the rending earthquake, the parting of the heavy curtain in the temple, the coming forth of some of the dead, were all events bearing witness to the extraordinary character and import of the person and death of Jesus Christ. The purpose of these phenomena was realized in the minds and hearts of such men as the centurion, who exclaimed:

“Certainly this was a righteous man, truly this was the Son of God.”

The primary, the never-to-be-forgotten, lesson of Christ’s death we have already considered. It made possible our salvation. But there are also some practical lessons for the everyday life which we should not fail to learn. Christ died for our sins that we also might die unto them. Seeing what a terrible thing sin is as was shown in its effects on the holy Jesus, when He became our substitute, we should come to hate it, and, by His gracious help, forsake it. And to this end there is no motive power comparable to that of the indwelling Christ, the Christ who died for us, and arose again. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

The Lord of Glory in the Grave

If the enemies of Jesus, the Jewish leaders, had been allowed to have their way His dead body would have received little consideration. It would probably have been unceremoniously cast into some secluded ravine so as not to pollute their holy day. Had the Roman custom prevailed, Jesus and His companions in suffering and death would have been allowed, in all probability, to hang on the cross indefinitely. The Jewish custom was different. Their law prescribed that a corpse should be buried. They were especially careful about this in the vicinity of Jerusalem. And more particularly still at the season of the Passover. To look on a dead person in those days was especially polluting. This explains the solicitude of the Jewish authorities to have the death of Christ, and those crucified with Him, hurried; so that their bodies might be removed from the cross.

The two malefactors were probably quickly buried near the place of execution, or unceremoniously hurried away to some secluded ravine where it would require but little labor to hide them from view. This, in all likelihood, would have been the fate of Jesus also had not God raised up unexpected friends to fulfill what had been written of Him of old, that He should make His grave with the rich and great.

It was a humane Roman custom to give the bodies of those executed to their friends, if they had any, and they were willing or desirous of performing the last rites for the dead. Such a claimant, an unexpected one, appeared for the body of Jesus. It was Joseph of Arimathaea, a man of whose history we know nothing with certainty. He was possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, and, we are told, a secret disciple of Jesus. A secret disciple! How the conscience of Joseph must have chided him in this hour, how guilty he must have felt, for having acted so cowardly toward Jesus while He was living. For it seems that Joseph's attachment for Him was no ordinary one. But pride of position, or something of the kind, had kept him back from open confession. Just as many today, for somewhat similar reasons, will not publicly own Jesus as their Savior. But now in the hour of testing, when all others failed, Joseph comes boldly to Pilate, and begs for the body of Jesus. The request was readily granted. And, in company with another secret disciple, whom we have met early in the Gospel record, Nicodemus, he rever-

ently takes down the body of Jesus from the cross, and gives it not only a decent, but, we may say, a royal burial.

In a garden, apparently not far removed from the place of execution, Joseph had prepared a rock-hewn grave for himself. It was the desire of all devout Israelites to be buried, if possible, within the precincts of the holy city — Jerusalem. To this new-made grave Joseph and Nicodemus, at last grown courageous, bear the body of their beloved Master. With loving, but hurried, hands, for the Sabbath was drawing near, they prepared the body for burial. Joseph, besides furnishing the tomb, supplied the new linen for enswathing the body, while Nicodemus, as his offering of affection, brought “a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight.” This was used for purposes of embalming. And soon these aged counselors of Israel, wealthy, aristocratic, reserved, fearful, clasped hands about the cold silent form of Jesus, as they bore Him to the new tomb in Joseph’s garden.

Jesus was honored by men in His death as He had seldom been honored in life; as is so often the case with others. And yet His going down into the grave was the last and lowliest step in the life of humble, loving service given to the children of men. We understand that the redemption was completed when, on the cross, Jesus cried, “It is finished.” But this last step of the immortal Savior, resting His mortal body in the grave, He submitted to, not only as a proof of the reality of His death; but also that in His own life no experience might be lacking of all that which comes to his brethren of mankind.

It was characteristic of the piety of a former age to seek seclusion among the tombs, and to mortify the pride of the flesh by reflections of a nature such as the surroundings were calculated to inspire. Another conception of religion, a much more cheerful one is now prevalent. But every person given to reflection must think sometimes of the end toward which, with tireless, never-resting feet, he is hastening. And every person, with any depth of affection, and constancy of attachment, must think, at times, of the last earthly resting place of that which is mortal of his loved ones who have gone on before. What can be so helpful, what can throw such light on the subject, or give such unfailing comfort, as the lessons taught by the grave of Him who said,

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Jesus hallowed also the grave. It is because He rested there that death has lost its sting, and the grave its victory. Jesus has proven, by word and act, that for our loved ones, as for ourselves, the grave is but the temporary resting place of the weary and worn-out body. It can no more permanently claim us than it could so claim Jesus Himself. To all of us, his brethren, He says, "Because I live ye shall live also."

22. Christ's Descent Into Hell

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. — 1 Pet. 3:18—20.

FOR MORE THAN FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS the Christian Church has been repeating this clause of the Apostles' Creed: "He descended into hell." Most of us since early in life have been repeating these words frequently, many of us at least every Lord's day. After all these years what do these words mean to us? Have we a fairly well defined idea of what they may mean? Let us remember that, here as elsewhere, there is little profit in the mere repeating of words. It must be granted, however, that here, more than on many another point, there is some excuse for a lack of clearness. The descent of Christ into hell is a doctrine more briefly treated in the Scriptures than any other one incorporated in the Creed. Another element making for confusion is the fact that with respect to this doctrine there are so many divergent opinions among men. May the Lord of light give to us His enlightening Spirit that we may rightly understand His Word, and prize His truth. To this end let us today make a devout study of the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell.

I. What Does The Bible Mean By This?

The logical point of departure in considering this subject is to find out what the Creed and the Bible mean when they speak of a descent into hell on the part of Christ.

There are those who think, and many of them, that the words, "He descended into hell" is but another way of stating the truth expressed in the words "Dead, and buried." There are several reasons, however, which make

this position, it seems to us, untenable. The first is found in the nature and structure of the Creed itself. The Apostles' Creed is the briefest possible epitome of Gospel truth. So brief is it that only two fundamental points are touched on in the whole life of Christ, — His birth and His death. This brevity has been a source of objection on the part of not a few critics of the Creed. Now if these words, "He descended into hell," are a development, or explanation, of the thought contained in the words "dead, and buried," it is not only a very strange departure from the principle of brevity in accordance with which the whole Creed is constructed; but, worse, it introduces as an explanatory clause a statement not as clear by any means to the ordinary reader as the words it is supposed to explain. Still further, the clause "He descended into hell," explained as but a differently expressed verbal equivalent of "dead, and buried," by no means gives an adequate idea of the teaching of those Scripture passages which treat of Christ's life during the interval between His burial and resurrection.

To get an adequate understanding of the doctrine of the descent into hell we must know what the Scriptures mean by the word hell itself. We have here a term which many would like, and some have resolved, to omit from the catalogue of theological terms; at least when considered as a place of punishment. However, this cannot be done without eliminating a considerable portion of God's holy Word. As long as men want to hold to the sweet comfort, and derive the strength which comes from the Biblical teaching concerning heaven, they will have to be content to retain its teaching concerning hell. The Scriptures represent these two places as the opposite extremes, the opposite states of existence toward which all human life is gravitating. And any line of argument which will destroy the one will apply with equal force to the other. We believe God's Word when it says there is such a place. Now, disentangled from all the rubbish of human opinion, what is the biblical meaning of the word hell? Taking its coloring from the nature of the place specifically known as hell, there are instances where the word means simply the extreme of human anguish, physical, mental, or spiritual; as when the Psalmist says:

"The pains of hell got hold upon me" (Ps. 116:3).

Sometimes the word is used in a wide sense, and means no more than the region of the dead in general. This is probably all that St. Peter had in mind

when, on the day of Pentecost, he spoke to the multitude concerning Christ that His soul was not left in hell. When Jesus died His natural human soul took its flight into hades, the realm of the abode of disembodied spirits. Jesus had taken man's place. All the experiences of those whose place He had taken were to be His own personal experiences. So when Jesus died His body went to the grave, His soul into the realm of the disembodied spirits. This for His soul, as the grave for His body, was the last step in Christ's humiliation.

The locality, extent, appearance, and kindred questions concerning hell we shall not attempt to discuss. The Scriptures give us no certain data for doing so. But there is a specific sense in which the word hell is used in God's Word; namely, as a state of existence, a condition of life the opposite of heaven; the place of abode of those who have willfully separated themselves from the life which is in God. The final stage and state in the lot of the saved and lost has not yet been reached. The public proclamation and confirmation of the condition has not yet been made. The body is not yet participating in it. But when death comes the choice has been made, the lot cast, and the condition fixed. This doctrine of the twofold state of those who have passed into death is strikingly and emphatically set forth in the record which tells of the rich man and Lazarus. It was into that part of hades which is the abode of the blessed, or Paradise, into which the soul of Jesus passed at His death, as He said on the cross.

This, however, is not what we understand by Christ's descent into hell as it is set forth in the Creed, and in our text. According to this passage, which is the chief seat of the doctrine of Christ's descent, Jesus, after His body had been quickened by the Divine Spirit, after His soul had come back to dwell in His resurrection body, went, under the guidance of the same Divine Spirit, went as the whole Divine-human person, into the whole realm of the dead.

II. Why Did Christ Descend Into Hell?

Let us now, in the second place, consider the purpose for which Christ Jesus descended into hell.

With respect to the whole article concerning the descent into hell, we should bear in mind the advice of the great reformer, and our confessions

generally, to the effect that we should not give way to idle curiosity, or be led into vain speculation. This article cannot be comprehended by the reason and the five senses. "In such mysteries of faith we have only to believe and adhere to the Word."

This doctrine concerning a hell is, and no doubt was intended to be, a disturbing element in human life. It is a lash, making fearful the unbelieving and godless; a goad pricking the consciences of the careless. We all need this to some extent. And there are those who can scarcely be touched by any other motive.

There is much said, by certain people, of the injustice of eternal punishment. What is all this but an impeachment of God's character? Why do men rail against the doctrine of a hell unless they are afraid that they themselves, or somebody else, will be punished there innocently, or beyond their desert? Would God be God to allow such a thing to happen?

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" There will not be a soul in hell because God wants it there. There will never be a soul there that God would not have kept out if He had been allowed to do so.

In the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell, as the Bible represents it, and we understand it, there is nothing gloomy, nothing terrible; but just the reverse, both for Christ Himself, and for us his followers.

Let us approach the subject by clearing away what are evidently erroneous views. There are those who have understood that the words "He descended into hell" mean that Jesus went to the place of the lost to suffer the tortures of those confined there. Aepin, Calvin, and others clearly taught this. And it is probably because of the revulsion of feeling which this doctrine caused that some have been led to expunge the expression concerning the descent entirely from the Creed. One of the usual results of extremism is that the pendulum swings strongly in the opposite direction. That the above is not the meaning of the Scripture teaching on the subject is clear from a number of considerations. We do not mean to say that Christ did not endure the pangs of the condemned. The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus endured the full equivalent of the punishment due us for our sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." But all this was endured during life, especially in the closing hours of His passion, more particularly still in Gethsemane, and on the cross. The grounds for maintaining this are as follows, — Jesus' last word on the cross with re-

spect to His work was, "It is finished." His life-work was completed. The world was redeemed. Divine justice was satisfied. This being the case, there could be no demand for further suffering, no justice in it. Further, in speaking to the penitent thief, who was dying by His side on the cross, Jesus said: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Not in torment, but in the place of light and blessedness. This is confirmed by the final word of the dying Savior:

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

The soul-night which came over Jesus when the Father's face was averted from Him, because He had been made sin for us, was past. With the Father's face turned full upon Him again, it had become light at eventide. And the soul of Jesus took its flight from the weary, mangled body into the care and keeping of the loving heavenly Father, not into the torments of hell.

The church of Rome teaches that Christ's descent into hell was for the purpose of delivering the souls of the pious who died before the completion of His redemptive work. This doctrine is based on the assumption that there was no real forgiveness of sins, no real salvation during the time of the Old Testament covenant. They hold that the souls of men passed then into a kind of negative state, void of both happiness and punishment. The reason they assign for this belief is that there were no sacraments for conveying the blessings of God during the old dispensation. But when Christ came and completed His work, He personally went into the realm where abode the faithful, but really unsaved, children of God of the former time, made His redemption effective in them, and led them into glory. This would be fine fiction if it did not deal with such serious matters, and invalidate such clear revelations of God Himself. There was salvation under the old covenant. Of course it was by faith in the Messiah to come. And there were means of grace in those olden days, as well as now. God's Word is always the chief means of Grace; they had it. And they had Circumcision and the Passover as sacraments.

There are those who hold, and among them have been some of our own brethren, that the purpose of Christ's descent to the abode of the imprisoned spirits was to preach to the heathen, who had never heard of the Gospel of the grace of God, and the provision for their salvation, and thus give them an opportunity of accepting it. This is a pious hope rather than a revelation.

We know that God is going to deal lovingly, as well as justly, with all the children of men. He certainly will not condemn anyone who has not had a chance to be saved. But that Christ went to hades to bring the message of deliverance is not a matter of direct evidence. And the hope that this may once have been the case should not be allowed to become a ground of procrastination with anyone now.

How, then, do we understand the descent as to its purpose? From the brief statements of Scripture on the subject, our conception is that in Christ's whole divine-human nature, after His quickening, He went to show Himself to the princes of darkness, and the spirits of all the wicked, as the mighty, victorious chieftain who has vanquished sin, death, and the devil. This seems to be very clearly the teaching of St. Paul, when he says of Christ: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it;" namely, in His death. This supplements the statement of St. Peter in our text. This simply tells that Christ, who had been quickened by the Spirit, by the same Spirit went and preached to the spirits in prison. In the former passage, St. Paul tells us what the subject of this preaching was, the proclamation of their defeat, of Christ's victory over them.

The descent into hell, then, marks decisively the beginning of Christ's exaltation; which reached its climax in the accession of the Divine-human Christ to the throne of sovereignty and glory. This doctrine is in every way full of comfort and strength for Christ's disciples. It assures us that as Christ, our Lord, triumphed over all the snares and assaults of the devil; and not only so, but decisively defeated him: so shall we, through Christ, finally gloriously triumph over him.

23. The Resurrection Of Jesus

I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. . . . Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. — 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20.

THE CHILLING BLASTS OF WINTER are being moderated by the south winds; the Sun is making his northward journey; and the singing birds, the swelling buds and bursting flowers all remind us that the temporary reign of death in nature has passed. This is nature's witness to the spring which awaits the children of men after the winter of death. Every radiant blossom which has silently worked its way up from the cold, dead soil of winter is a smiling prophet of the resurrection.

Last Friday, Good Friday, was the day of all days which symbolized the world's starless night; the night of riot, of godlessness, of hopelessness; the carnival night of death. But Easter is here to remind us that the winter of our disappointment, the lenten season of gloom and sorrow, is past, that the springtime of joy, and peace, and hope, and life, are the enduring heritage of the children of men. Easter is the day of days which assures us that truth has defeated falsehood, that righteousness is triumphant over unrighteousness, that Jesus Christ has broken the dominance of Satan over the souls of men, and that, in the victory of Jesus, the representative and substitutionary man, there is the possibility of final victory for every one of the sons and daughters of Adam's sin-cursed and distressed race. This is the content of the joyous Easter message.

Let us take for our study and meditation this morning the absorbingly interesting and supremely important subject of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We shall consider it first of all as a fact of history, and then the relation of this fact to our Christian faith and life.

I. The Resurrection Of Jesus Is A Fact Of History.

One of the best substantiated facts of history, substantiated by every form of evidence; but the resurrection of Jesus is not an undisputed fact of history. Recognizing the supreme importance of this doctrine to the whole fabric of our Christian faith, the enemies of the Gospel have ever been active in trying to undermine faith in the historicity of the resurrection. This was begun at once. Those who had been instrumental in putting Jesus to death, recognizing that His resurrection would be an unanswerable testimony to the devilry of their deed, on being notified of the fact of Jesus' resurrection, began at once industriously to circulate the report that His body had been stolen by some of his friends. And from that day to this the enemies of Christ and His Gospel have been actively engaged in seeking to destroy this foundation truth of the Christian religion. In the earliest days the opposition was directed primarily against this particular miracle. In our modern day the opposition to the doctrine of the resurrection is prompted by the principle which maintains that miracles of any kind are impossible.

The particular line of attack which the opponents of the doctrine of the resurrection follow varies its form somewhat, but they all have the same general point of departure. They generally recognize the historic character of the evidence. They admit that the records telling us of this great truth were written by men who were eyewitnesses of the events of Christ's closing days, — His death and burial; that they were written by men who saw, or thought they saw, the risen Christ. But this latter is the point for the entering wedge of doubt. The deniers of a real resurrection maintain that these men, the Apostles, were mistaken, that they believed so profoundly all the time that Christ was going to rise from the dead that they allowed their subjective beliefs to assume the form of objective realities, that they came to believe that they saw what they were constantly hoping to see. Others represent the matter even in this form: God Himself, in order to assure the continued existence, and Lordship, of Jesus Christ, though in His purely spiritual nature, gave the disciples visions of Christ from time to time. All this is purely invention. It is contrary to the oft repeated statements of Scripture. It is in direct opposition to all that is revealed to us of the understanding, the

hopes and fears, of the Apostles. Let us now consider these facts of history as the Apostles themselves report them to us.

In the first place, though it is a revelation of their own lack of understanding and faulty faith, the Apostles clearly tell us that they were not confidently expecting Christ's resurrection. Indeed, they could not understand, they would not believe, that Jesus had to suffer and die. How, then, could it be with them a firmly fixed article of faith that He was to rise triumphantly? It was not, as they tell us.

Under the genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness Divine truth had taken root in the souls of the Apostles. This truth was slowly expanding. Their religious characters, which had been largely in a state of flux, were taking on something of form and firmness. But the one great truth which, as yet, they had not been able to accept, or grasp, either as to the fact or its meaning, was this that Jesus had to die in order to complete His work. In this state of mind and heart, consider how they must have felt when the darkness of Good Friday settled down about the cross. The foundation on which they had built was, apparently, destroyed. The staff on which they had leaned was broken. At one fell stroke their hopes were dashed to the ground. Can imagination conjure up a condition of life more helpless, hopeless, bewildered than that of the Apostles? It is to their discredit, but they do not try to hide it; they tell us all about it. They were not unbelievers, they were not enemies of the truth. They simply lacked understanding, lacked faith. They were lost, confounded in the maze of, apparently, irreconcilable contradictions; just as, under the circumstances, we would have been, or anyone else.

This condition is revealed by all the Gospel records on the subject. The Apostles, when they saw the Lord dead and buried, did not forget Him. Reason was confounded, faith was eclipsed; but love did not abdicate the throne. They were all thinking of Jesus. And early the first day of the week some of the devoted women came to visit His grave. But what a sorrowful picture they present. They were going to find, not a living, but a dead, friend. And how unutterably helpless and hopeless are their words of astonishment, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." Twice they had been robbed. Death had robbed them of the living Lord. And now some vandal had taken away even the lifeless body of their Master. And when the first visitors to the tomb told the Apostles of what they had seen and heard, these men could not believe it. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales." Could the picture

be painted in darker colors? Could a group of people be represented more completely overwhelmed, more hopeless, more helpless than these? Assuredly these were not the people, irrespective of their religious character, to carry out a gigantic scheme of deception.

What, then, is the simple, Biblical, historic teaching concerning Christ's resurrection? First of all, that He had actually died. He did not simply swoon, or pass into a comatose state from which He was revived. He died and was buried. By the power of God, in all three persons, the dead body of Jesus was raised from the dead. He did not appear in the form of a body just to convince the distressed Apostles of His continued existence. It was the actual body which was crucified on Calvary's cross which came forth from the grave on Easter morn. In this real, but glorified and heavenly body He reappeared to his disciples, and sojourned for awhile among them; being seen, not only by isolated individuals here and there, under mysterious circumstances; but by groups of the Apostles, by all of them, and to other believers to the number of five hundred.

The conviction of the Apostles as to the actuality of Jesus' resurrection, a conviction not easily produced, is the only thing which can satisfactorily explain the changed attitude, the absolute fearlessness, and wondrous activity we find in the Apostles so soon after the manifest helplessness of Good Friday. Is this not what St. Peter tells us when he says:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

The resurrection of Jesus was the key which revealed to them the real nature and mission of the Master. It became at once the burden of their preaching. On the day of Pentecost this was the message with which St. Peter wrought dismay in the ranks of the enemies of Jesus, and brought to faith those in whom the Spirit was allowed to do His work. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you all, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:22—24, 32).

The truth of a real bodily resurrection was proclaimed, not only by the original Apostles, but with equal frequency, clearness, and emphasis by the one who had been the greatest early enemy of Jesus and the doctrine of His resurrection, — St. Paul. He tells us that his apostleship rested on the fact of his having seen the Lord Christ. Unquestionably the risen, glorified Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Does he not tell us everywhere, as he does in our text, that the Christ whom it is his glory to preach is the Christ who died, who was buried, and who was raised again from the dead? And that all this was in accord with the Scriptures, that is in fulfillment of God’s predetermined plans?

II. The Meaning Of Christ’s Resurrection To Our Christian Life.

That Jesus rose from the dead, that His resurrection is an actual fact of history, is so well attested that few attempt outright to deny it. Something took place in the lives of the Apostles, something which so fundamentally transformed them, that it can be satisfactorily explained only by accepting the record of Christ’s resurrection which they gave. It is largely from the viewpoint of the effect of the Resurrection on the life of these people, of course, substantiated by their teaching, that we should learn the meaning of the resurrection to Christian life in general.

The first thing which we Christian people need to keep in mind is that Christ’s resurrection is the indisputable proof of the reality, and perfectly satisfactory character, of our redemption. Christ died announcing: “It is finished.” Easter morn is heaven’s response to that statement. It is finished. The Father has accepted what Jesus came to do. The work of redemption has been completed, not merely ended. Our sins have been taken away. The sacrifice was wholly sufficient. The only thing which stands between any human being and eternal life is the question of acceptance, or refusal to accept, the work of Jesus Christ in his behalf. We are perplexed, often perplexed, perplexed by the fractional vision of things which alone are possible to us, perplexed by the nature and extent of our ills; but here it stands written, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. And we

know, those who have allowed Jesus to come into their hearts know, that He has taken away sin; for we have felt the peace of sins forgiven. But this brings us to a new subject.

We have seen that the Apostles, after Easter, were new men. This change of character is not to be explained by the simple fact of a change of opinion. These men did have changed views, an enlarged understanding, a clarified vision; but it was more than an intellectual change. It was the incoming of a truth which changed the whole life. And that incoming truth was the Christ Himself, whom they had but imperfectly understood up to the time of His resurrection. When the Apostles came to know the meaning of Jesus' death, and the certainty of His resurrection, they rose with Him into a new life. Their old selfishness disappeared, their fears evaporated, sacrifices henceforth become joys, their highest ambitions were to live in fellowship with the risen Lord, and further His work.

The truth of Christ's resurrection, when truly embraced, always has, must have, this effect in men's lives. The depressing burden of sin is lifted, Jesus has taken it away. Instead of the reign of self in man's life, Jesus reigns in him and over him. Much of the old carnal self is burned away in the holy fire of the new faith and the new love. The whole outlook on life is vitally changed. The center of interest is changed from things earthly to things heavenly, from things perishable to the things imperishable. This is what the Apostle means when he says:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1).

The things which are above are not first of all, so far as our lives are concerned, eternal life and glory; they are the things of the practical life which have their source and sustaining power above, in the risen, glorified Christ. The living, glorified Christ living in man's heart means higher conceptions of the dignity of human life; it means a higher conception of parenthood; childhood takes on an added worth; citizenship assumes a new dignity; the toil for daily bread becomes sacred, for it is instrumental in serving eternal ends. The things above which come into the lives of those who have risen with Christ are, as the Apostle explains in this same chapter, mercy, kindness, humbleness, forgiveness, forbearance, love of truth, purity, peace and love. Oh, no, the resurrection of Jesus is not only a dogma, to be abstractly pondered, objectively believed, and formally defended; it is a power, a liv-

ing, transforming power. It is of worth only where it is so entertained that it means a living appropriation of the risen Lord Himself, the incoming of His full, perfect life for the curing of the ills of our imperfect life.

Easter, with its triumphant message of a risen Redeemer, has done more than any other thing to put purpose and worthwhileness into human life. The round of the daily routine becomes very much like drudgery when there is no worthy, lasting object in view. And if there is nothing which lasts beyond the confines of the little span of existence which is cut out for each one here, the question will persistently recur, — is it all worth while? And when the need for exertion still remains, but the strength has been undermined, and there is a heavy burden of pain to be borne; then the question becomes still more insistent. To these and all similar questions Easter gives the unmistakable answer. All human life may be made worthwhile, because these are but the days of the body of our humiliation. If the risen Christ has become the life of our life there shall be an Easter for us also. Then the burdens will be left behind. Then the imperfect shall have become perfect. Then there will no longer be the question about the worthwhileness of life. In that universal Easter-day we shall be perfectly satisfied, for we shall have arisen in His likeness.

As Christmas is, in a certain sense, the children's great festival, so Easter is, in a sense, the special festival of the aged. As age comes on the grasp of many things naturally loosens. To those whose affections are set on the things of earth alone, this means heartache, and gloomy retrospect. They live in the past, they regard the future with feelings which make them, to say the least, ill at ease. It is not so with those who have grown old with Christ, who have known, and still know, the power of His resurrection. They have experienced the fulfillment of the ancient promise:

“Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs I will carry you” (Isa 46:4).

There is quite generally a sanctified joy, a blessed restfulness, a cheery hopefulness in the latter days of those who have faithfully followed Christ. They are not unmindful of the fact that the shadows are lengthening, that the sands are running lower in the glass, that their locks are thin and white, that their steps are growing more and more tottering; but they are not dismayed. The road over which they must go they have never traveled; but others near and dear to them have traveled it, and they beckon them to fol-

low unafraid. But the real secret of the courage and good cheer of these aged pilgrim warriors is that Jesus is with them. He has been over the way. He smoothed its rough places. He took away the dangers. And He tenderly takes the trembling traveler's hand and assures them, not only of a safe passage, but of better things at the end of the journey. And so there is a hopefulness, and a faraway look in these patriarchs' eyes; and they travel on dreaming of that assured land, where every day is spring, redolent with the perfume of flowers; where friends are forever united, where all is perfect, and shedding His radiance over all the risen and forever triumphant Lord.

As the years pass every one of us is called upon to surrender those whose lives were intertwined closely with ours. How often, as we sit wistfully in the shadows, do the old loves burn in the heart, and questions concerning their estate in the great beyond press upon us. With respect to many of these questions, at least so far as details are concerned, the veil has not been lifted; but still there is enough to give us all needed comfort. If they were believers in Christ in this life, they have passed into life, they are with Christ. That is enough, to know that they are with, and partaking of the victory of the risen Lord.

As for ourselves, our spirits still bear the vesture of flesh and blood; and flesh and blood, though dwelt in by a renewed spirit, is still weak and sinful. This explains our doubts and fears. But the Easter message of the risen Lord comes again and again to cheer and reassure us. Gradually life is transfigured, fears vanish, doubts lose their power; the words of Jesus become more and more reassuring: Fear not, I am He that was dead, and, behold, I am alive forever more. And because I live ye shall live also. "He is risen" is the world's greatest cry of victory. It has done more to put hope, and courage, and cheer into the hearts of men than any message that has ever been proclaimed. It has put a song of victory on the lips of untold millions of the weary and worn children of men. Blessed forever be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us unto this lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

24. Christ's Ascension

And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. — St. Luke 24:50—53.

WE NOW COME TO CONSIDER that point of the Church's great Creed which treats of the coronation of the Prince of life. Many times during His ministry did Jesus speak of the fact that, as He had come down from heaven, so was He to return to heaven. In the sense in which we usually think of it, earth could not be Jesus' permanent home. Indeed, there is something within which tells us that earth, as it now is, is not suited to be our permanent place of abode. There are longings, aspirations, in every awakened soul which cannot be satisfied with the things which are merely of time and sense. We need, if not a larger sphere, then more perfect conditions than this sin-cursed earth can afford, for the perfect unfolding of the life created in the image of God.

From the time of His resurrection Jesus showed more clearly than ever that He was not at home in the earth. There was an air of other-worldliness about Him which proclaimed Him a stranger here. The air about this planet of ours is always more or less impure. Poisonous vapors, smoke and dust continually contaminate it. Above these strata of noxious gases, smoke and dust is the purer, more rarefied air. There is something like this from the spiritual viewpoint. This alone would have made it so that it could not be Jesus' permanent home, nor the seat of His all-glorious throne. Love brought Him down from heaven, and kept Him here till His work was done. Then came the time for His home-going. This was the natural climax to the life He had lived, and the work He did. Let us today give further consideration to Christ's ascension into heaven.

We will notice, in the first place, what this ascension meant to Jesus Himself; and then what it meant to His disciples, and should mean to us.

I. What Christ's Ascension Meant To Him

Unquestionably Christ's ascension meant very much to Him. He had been looking forward to this day with eager anticipation. His frequent use of the word Father betrays a heart-longing which could never be satisfied till He stood in the beloved Presence. On the night of the betrayal, as He consciously faced His approaching trying ordeals, His vision pierced beyond the low-hanging dark, lowering clouds to the glory which awaited the victor with the hard earned laurels, and He cried out: "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." To Mary, on the first Easter morn, when in the ecstasy of her joy she would have embraced Him, He said: "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." While never for a moment forgetful of the fears and needs of his brethren in the flesh, and most reassuringly linking their names, and our names, with His Father's fatherhood and Godship, Christ's thoughts were increasingly centered in heaven, and on the throne.

First of all, let us consider the fact of the ascension itself. How simply the story is told by the Evangelists. There is no attempt at word jointing. The subject does not need it. Any attempt at human adornment would mar its simple, inherent sublimity, and heart-touching appeal.

On the fortieth day after Easter Jesus led his disciples forth as far as to Bethany. Jesus was leading his followers over familiar paths, probably up the road down which they had come with the shouting multitude the week of His crucifixion. Crossing the brow of the Mount of Olives they came to a secluded spot near which, in a depression, clustering beneath its olive trees, stood the village of Bethany. Bethany, when we read this name in connection with the ascension we cannot but wonder whether those loving friends of Jesus, who lived here, and one of whom He brought back from the grave, were not privileged to be witnesses of this final scene, and partakers of that final blessing.

What a never-to-be-forgotten scene, precious to the saints even to this distant day. Words of assurance had been spoken. Promises of power were given. The last act of the risen Lord was one of benediction. Then, while Jesus' hands were still outstretched in blessing, and words of peace were fall-

ing from His lips, He was parted from the disciples, and mounted slowly upward into heaven, until a waiting cloud veiled His withdrawing form, and finally hid Him from their sight.

The brief records say that Jesus was taken into heaven, again they say He went into heaven. There is no contradiction. As the Son of God He went into heaven by His own inherent power, by which also He could have taken, and in a sense did take, His glorified humanity with Him. But as the Son of Man, who ever exemplified His own precept that it was not becoming to exalt one's self, He was taken into heaven by the everlasting Father.

"He ascended into heaven.

“Carried up into heaven.” Heaven! What a transcendently glorious word! How the souls of the devout become enraptured by its contemplation. In all ages, in every clime, men have thought of, dreamed about, and hoped for a place somewhat like unto what the Christian has learned, by revelation, to understand by the word heaven. But the heavens of man's invention, by whatever names they may have called them, are but poor, vulgar caricatures of God's heaven. What this is in all of its richness and glory, and perfect adaption to the new existence of all the saints of God, no mortal in this life knows, and if we could know we would find language too beggarly to tell it. We must die and pass within the portals to find this out. And no doubt one reason why more knowledge of this place and condition has not been vouchsafed to us is that the glorious vision would unfit us for present duty. But the inspired Word gives us to understand that heaven is where God, in a special sense, has the seat of His government. It is the place which He has prepared as the place of abode for his saved and glorified children. They are not to be homeless wanderers, they are to have a home. Heaven is, according to all the evidence, not a mere state, or condition, much less is it a mere ideal conception, an effort at poetry; but a real place, the light and life and glory of which is God Himself. It is the place where the full effulgence of the Divine perfections shine forth. Heaven is the place where saved souls are brought into perfect fellowship with God, where the heart-hunger for God is satisfied. Without this there is no heaven for man. At best there is comparatively little which we can say about heaven in a descriptive way. It is enough to know that heaven is a place worthy of the exalted character of God Himself.

Into this heaven, to the seat of world-authority, the home of the ever blessed, Jesus went when He ascended. But let us not forget that the outstanding thought in the fact of His ascension is that He took His humanity, His glorified resurrection body, with Him into heaven. Forever in heaven the Son of God is our brother, wearing the glorified livery of our human nature. Forever in that celestial home God and man are inseparably united in Christ Jesus. Forever the humanity which is part of the person of the Son of God will be the point of contact between the race of men and God. In all the history of mankind, in all the category of great achievements, there is nothing so intrinsically glorious and hopeful for the children of men as the simple fact of Jesus having taken our nature into heaven.

Jesus Christ, the God-man, did not ascend into heaven as a conqueror who was going into rest and retirement. He went there in His divine-human nature to be crowned as the King of power and glory. As St. Peter says:

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour (Acts 5:30, 31).

We think of the meekness and gentleness, the tenderness and humility, of Jesus, and we cannot think too frequently, or adoringly, of these qualities; but it is a serious fault to forget, or fail to stress, the strength and courage of Jesus, the daring back of His lowliness, or the fact that, though love was His weapon, He wielded it with a knightly soldier's hand. And now, in the realm of glory, the exalted God-man is the head, the generalissimo, of the armies of God both in heaven and on earth. He is the new Joshua to lead the chosen of God into the heavenly Canaan. He is the greater son of David to enlarge and solidify the Kingdom of God. With the ascended, enthroned Jesus as the captain of our salvation we need have no fear. Loud above the roar of every conflict His voice sounds clear and strong:

"Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore."

II. What It Meant To The Apostles

In the light of what the Ascension meant, and still means, to Jesus Himself, let us consider what it meant to the Apostles, and should mean to us.

When Jesus went up into glory those privileged to witness the ascension were, for the time, rooted to the spot. The indications are that they stood silent, absorbed in thought, with feelings too deep for utterance. In a certain sense they may have again felt orphaned; but it was not such a feeling as sealed their lips on Good Friday, not such a feeling as mastered some of them on that first Easter day as they stood, or walked about sad and silent from sheer exhaustion and hopelessness. It was a silence wrought by the vision of unutterable glory, the silence of an adoration too profound to be, at once, formulated into human speech.

There was a time when the Apostles had built much on Jesus' visible presence with them. He was to be the source of their inspiration, the formulator of their plans, their conquering hero. But in the past forty days they had been, no doubt, much weaned from this view. Still Christ's ascension probably came with something of a shock. And it no doubt left them with a feeling of homesickness. Jesus' going away thus gave emphatic emphasis to the fact that present scenes and conditions do not form the setting for man's highest estate, or his permanent abode. Where Jesus had gone there, and there alone, would they attain to the blessings and glories to which all the better of the children of men aspire, and of which they had received clearer visions as they listened to the words of Jesus.

With Jesus' ascension many lessons began to take form in the minds and hearts of the Apostles. He had said to them previously: "It is expedient for you that I go away." We probably do not yet fully grasp all that is comprised in this word, expedient. At first they scarcely understood it at all. I think that now it began to dawn on them that it was all a part of God's glorious scheme for their and the world's good; that Jesus' presence, in the manner in which He had been associating with them was no longer essential to the earthly measure of their happiness, or the fullest possible measure of success in the work He had given them to do. Indeed, ere many days they came to know that He was going away only to continue, in another form, His work for them; that His going away was the condition of the bestowal of blessings absolutely essential to the proper prosecution of the work He had given them to do. So, very soon, as a result of Jesus' going away, the religion of the disciples became more spiritual.

The picture which the Scriptures give us of Christ's ascension is painted with but a few strokes, but they are masterly and effective. One inspired writer tells us that the disciples stood gazing into heaven whence Jesus had disappeared. They were entranced, drawn out of themselves heavenward. But that very fact accounts for the statement of our text that they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. When once men get the right kind of a look into heaven it gives them a joy which goes into all the affairs of life. If these men had had something of this look into heaven forty-odd days before, Good Friday would have been to them a day of sorrows, but it would not have been a day of terror. Death and the grave have altogether a different look to those who turn to them after looking into heaven.

The day of Christ's ascension was the beginning of a new day of faith for the Apostles. I think this is indicated by the words of our text informing us that they continued in "the temple praising and blessing God." Jesus was gone, as the writer of Acts says, "out of their sight," but hope and joy had, that day, a new birth in their souls. They were beginning to understand; past utterances were beginning to unfold their rich meaning. He was out of their sight, they were not out of His. Out of sight, but not by way of abandoning them. Gone, but was not His last act that of raising His hands protectingly over them? His last word a blessing? Gone, but they were more certain now than ever before that heaven, and the mysterious unexplored future, had a life, a place, a blessing for them.

And with this new clarity of vision, and added measure of faith came a newborn courage. They were no longer a set of trembling men skulking in the shadows. They came out into the light of day, and avowed their faith. Jesus had triumphed. His cause was going to triumph. And that meant that they were going to triumph. This kind of conviction it is which puts the iron into men's souls.

With a glowing faith in their hearts, and their whole being animated by the courage which is the legitimate child of faith, these men were ready for daring activity. Faith gives courage not only to bear, but to dare and do. Between Easter and Ascension but little is said of the Apostles save in their relation to Jesus as they were learning the great lessons of the reality of His resurrection. From Olivet and the look into heaven as they followed the departing Saviour, the Apostles return to Jerusalem; for did they not remember the Master's admonition to wait till they were endued with power from on high? But while waiting they worship and confess. And just as soon as

they received the fulfillment of the promise of power they began the fulfillment of the ascending Lord's last command: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And with what heaven-born zeal, and consecrated self-forgetfulness they did this work! Stripes and imprisonment could not dampen their ardor, fire and sword could not seal their lips or turn them from their Christ-appointed way. And what was the secret of their unfaltering courage, of their willingly made sacrifices? Just this, they did not give up their heavenward look; their affections were set on the things of heaven, where Christ sits on the throne of power and glory at the right hand of the Father.

The most enduring work in this world, the only work which endures eternally, is done by the men and women whose thoughts, whose hearts, are in heaven. Only those whose souls swell with hope have the heart to bear, to endure, to persevere in these great fundamental tasks the fruitage of which heaven alone fully reveals. To the heavenward gazing disciples the angels said: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." And then they knew they should get their eternal reward.

This is a beautiful picture. We love to contemplate it. But it is not a picture to lull us to sleep, rather to fire us with a heaven-born life and energy. The lapse of almost nineteen hundred years makes but little difference between us and those early disciples so far as the fundamental lessons are concerned which the ascension of Jesus teaches.

The passing centuries have only helped to emphasize the truth that heaven is the only proper place for a Savior who was to draw the people of all the nations unto Himself. How could these scattered millions of every tongue and every clime have come to, or keep company with, the One Shepherd if He had set up His throne in visible fashion on the earth? Comparatively few at anyone time would have been privileged to see or hear Him. So He set up His throne in heaven alike unseen to all, but alike accessible to all. And as discipleship depends on no kind of material relationship, or ocular demonstrations; but on faith, wrought by the Spirit's operations, so Jesus went into heaven where all must come, not now in body but in spirit. And all those who would have faith, and courage, and resolute activity in Christian service, must spend much time on Olivet, in contemplating Christ's ascension.

To be benefited by a study of Christ's ascension, we must consider it not only as an event of centuries long gone by, as a truth of other years. As a fact of history the ascension is of the long ago, the purpose of the ascension is a fact of the living present. He went to the throne to rule over us and for us, to be the object of our faith, the inspiration of our courage, the sustaining power of our activity. We are not to stand idly gazing into heaven, but, in the midst of an active life, to be often and livingly looking to the place to which Jesus went, and from which He is to come again with our reward.

25. Jesus At The Father's Right Hand

So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. — St. Luke 16:19.

THE STATEMENT OF OUR CREED that the risen Saviour “ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,” may appear to some to set forth two truths; but, in reality, these two clauses present but the two phases of one event. The word ascension tells us of the triumphant procession to the throne; the being seated at the right hand of the Father tells us of the end of the journey, the coronation, and the continued exercise of kingly prerogatives.

The story of the Ascension is itself full of lessons for the devout, thinking Christian. It speaks volumes concerning the character and work of Jesus. It is the final word as to His essential God-head. It is full of assurance as to the satisfactory character of His work. More than multiplied discourses the simply recorded fact of Christ's ascension impresses us with the beauty, the power, the sublimity, the heavenliness of His person. It would have been difficult for human mind to conceive of anything which would have added to the perfection of the picture of the ascending Christ; but the impression of the picture is intensified, the local coloring is put into it, emphasis is given to its lessons, when the dissolving film of the scene shows to the eye of faith the Christ no longer ascending, no longer an absent prince, but at home with the Father, the crown of victory on His thorn-scarred brow, the sceptre of world-power in His pierced hands, seated forever on the throne of glory. Let us then today consider the goal of the ascension, Jesus on the throne of Heaven, Jesus at the Father's right hand.

At God's Right Hand

The rational method of procedure in considering this subject is for us to inquire, first of all, what is meant by the phrase, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. This step is always one of the first which should be taken in treating a subject not generally understood. This inquiry is all the more important because there is some divergence of opinion as to just what is meant by Jesus being seated at God's right hand. And this difference of opinion has its bearing on other important Biblical doctrines, such, for instance, as that of the real presence in the Lord's Supper.

There are those who interpret the words, "Sitting at the right hand of God" in a local manner. That is, they regard Christ's occupancy of the throne of heaven very much as they do that of a human monarch on an earthly throne. For instance, one of the noted theologians entertaining this view says of Christ's ascension: "It was a local transfer of His person from one place to another." And with respect to Jesus' residence in heaven, the same man says: "If Christ has a true body, it must occupy a definite portion of space."

That Jesus Christ went into heaven as the God-man; that is, that He took His human nature with Him, is believed by all Biblical Christians; few truths are more clearly taught. That Jesus, when He thus went to heaven, sat down at the right hand of God the Father is not only a Biblical thought, but a Biblical statement expressed in specific words. St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, says that in the last days God had spoken to the world by His Son; and that He, after purging us of our sins, "Sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). After much the same general line of argument, the same Apostle tells the Ephesians that God raised Christ from the dead, and "set Him at His own right hand" (1:20). Another apostle, St. Peter, arguing the efficacy of baptism, declares that it was certified "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God" (1 Pet. 3:22).

Now, in the light of God's Word, let us inquire what is meant by Christ's sitting at God's right hand. Does it mean only this that Jesus, as to His human nature, occupies a literal throne, which may be seen and felt? We believe, on good Biblical grounds, that when we get to heaven we are going to see Jesus. He took His humanity with Him. There in heaven He is our brother, as well as our God. It may be that when we get there we shall see a throne. And it may be that at times we shall see Jesus on that throne. We do not perplex ourselves very much about these things, they are but the

draperies of greater realities. But that the existence of such a possible literal throne, and its literal occupancy by the ascended God-man, is not all that is meant by His sitting at the right hand of God is very clear to many of us as we follow closely the teaching of God's holy Word.

That the right hand of God cannot be pressed to mean a purely localized place, a material throne, seems to us to be clear from the fact that God, as God, has no right hand. God is a spirit without members such as man has. True it is, God's Word often speaks of His Having eyes, ears, hands, feet, and the like; but this is an accommodation to human modes of thinking for the purpose of emphasizing His watchfulness, His care, and His power. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Ps. 34:15). "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand" (Ps. 89:13). That these expressions are not to be understood in a localized and material manner is clear from such a statement as this:

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I go from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:7—10).

God's hand is everywhere, because God is everywhere. His eye, His ear, His foot is everywhere, because God is everywhere. So Christ's sitting at God's right hand means to occupy the position of honor and power wherever God is.

This seems to be the very clear teaching of the passages which treat of Christ's session at the Father's side. In Philippians two, St. Paul tells us that Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took on Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, says the Apostle, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In this passage no specific mention is made of Christ's ascension, or of His being seated at the Father's right hand; but it is, as to the latter part, the classical description of that which becomes fully

and unendingly Christ's on his return to heaven. It was the giving of universal lordship to Him, and not the placing of Him, like a piece of statuary in some hall of fame, on a localized throne. And this truth, it would seem, should be forever settled by the Apostle's words in Ephesians in which he tells us that God raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Not in the heavenly place, but places; that is, in the domain of heavenly things. And that it does not refer to a location, but to a condition of life, to the exercise of Divine sovereignty, is made clear by the next verse in which the Apostle thus proceeds:

“Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all things.”

The real point of the seating of Jesus at the right hand of the Father is lost when we fail to remember that it has reference to the raising of Christ's human nature to the honor, and glory of the full participation in the prerogatives of the Divine nature. Jesus is all powerful not only as the Son of God, but also as the son of man, as He says: “All power is given me,” to His human nature, for as to His divine nature there never was a moment when He lacked it; “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (St. Matt. 28:18). Jesus knows all things, and is everywhere present, not only according to His Deity, but in His human nature by virtue of its personal union with the Divine.

If this be not true, if the human nature of the Redeemer does not partake of the glories, and participate in the activities, of His Divinity, if His human nature is localized and circumscribed on some tangible throne in heaven, then it follows that the whole Christ can never be with his people on earth, that to be with them at all there must be some method by which the Godhead of Christ dissevers itself from His humanity. But this is not Biblical. Jesus says: “Lo, I,” the One who stands before you, the Son of God, who came down from heaven; and the son of man, who was taken into inseparable union with the Son of God; “I,” the God-man, “am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (St. Matt. 28:20).

This is not a subject for idle speculation, it is not one to which we can give a definite analysis, it is full of mysteries, we are willing that it should be so, seeing that it is a mystery that is full of glory for our Saviour, and full

of comfort for us. And accepting the teachings of God's Word concerning Christ's post-ascension life in heaven, we are prepared thereby to receive, and, in a measure, to understand Christ's sacramental presence.

The King Forever

When Jesus walked the earth He was known as the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief; he had come to be a servant, to work and endure. For love's sweet sake He had surrendered His life for a season, and rested for a little while in the shadow of the tomb. Though, ordinarily, not showing forth, during this time, His divine nature and power, there was not a moment, from Bethlehem to Joseph's garden, when He did not possess, in His own right all the powers and prerogatives of Deity. He had chosen, for the good of His cause, to keep the glory of His kingship hidden. But now all this is forever past. The angels have sung their anthem of welcome to the returning King who had stooped to conquer.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.” In a special sense Jesus had made His advent, as the God-man, into that bright and deathless world which, in a distinctive sense, is the home of God. That celestial splendor which, for a little season, had shone forth on the Mount of transfiguration, now became Jesus' permanent possession. Saul caught a glimpse of it from afar as he journeyed to Damascus, and its exceeding brightness blinded him. This brightness, this indescribable celestial splendor is now the everyday garb of the ascended, glorified Jesus.

Among the native inhabitants of heaven, it seems, there are beings of greater and less degrees of glory; thrones splendid and more splendid, crowns glorious and still more glorious. In all the realms of space, in all the ages of time, past, present or future, there is, apart from the everlasting Father, no name to rival the name of Jesus, no throne to rival His in kingliness, no crown to be compared to the glory of his. There is no power, save that of the eternal Father Himself, which does not owe, and will be obliged to yield, to the God-man the tribute of honor. God “hath put all things under His feet.” Jesus Christ, the God-man, the once betrayed, crucified, buried;

but now arisen and ascended Redeemer, is now, as to His human nature, filled with all the fulness of God, and has become the head over all things.

The kingship of Jesus Christ, what a theme! It never has been, it never will be, exhausted in the thought of any creature. The angels are still desiring to look into it. Throughout the endless ages the redeemed will meditate on this subject with never ending delight.

Jesus of Nazareth the king forever on the one lasting throne of the universe. What a paradox! But what a commentary on the unchanging laws on which the universe is built. He loved righteousness, He lived and wrought in the sphere of truth, this will bring anyone to victory. But only Jesus Christ, the God-man, the world's great champion of truth and righteousness, could come to this throne. It was His. No one besides could occupy it, for no one else could discharge its obligations.

The kingship of Jesus! Men in all the ages have been looking for a king, one who could fight successfully their battles, bring them deliverance, prosperity, and peace. Sometimes, in certain quarters of the world, men have thought they had found the object of their quest; some one who was able to give them the present measure of their quest. But the horizon continued to widen, the deeper longings of men's souls were not satisfied. Here at last is the world's desired King. He has made provision for all man's wants. He can satisfy all man's aspirations. He now sits, our brother and our God on the world's central throne. He rules with a will and a power not to be calculated or controlled by man.

Still Our Friend and Helper

Sometimes in the affairs of earth men are given titles of honor, and honorary position as a reward for services rendered, and as a gentle hint that it is time for retirement, to rest on their oars, and dream of their past achievements. Not so with Jesus, the God-man, when He was raised to the pinnacle of heavenly glory and power. He was raised to kingship not only in name, but in fact; He was given sovereignty not only as an honor, but for use. Jesus went to heaven not only to open the way for us as He went, but to prepare a place for us, and to continue to help us on the way.

There is a sense in which Jesus went to heaven leaving behind a finished task. "He has offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever." He did no work for

his generation which others will have to do for succeeding generations. He fulfilled all righteousness, no one can alter or improve the pattern. He has spoken all needed truth, no one can add to His words. He has not had, nor will He ever have, any successors as prophet, priest, or king. He left behind a finished work in which all men may confidently trust, but which no man can continue. And yet Jesus went to heaven to be crowned that He might continue to work for mankind.

The God-man is the eternally crowned king of the universe, but He is still present with us, still working for us. His going up to glory did not mean His withdrawal from the field of battle, to leave us down here alone shivering with fear. "Lo, I am with you always." Jesus went to the throne that He might fill all things; that He might pour out His Spirit abundantly upon us; that we might be enabled, with our bruised feet and weary limbs, to climb the heights which lead to glory and to God. Jesus went to heaven's throne that the hands once nailed to the cross might wield the plenitude of heaven's power for the furtherance of our salvation. "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast taken captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men."

Unbelievers mock concerning the kingdom of the exalted God-man, and scout the idea of its ultimate triumph; and even we Christians have our moments of weakness, as we behold the conflicts going on about us. But the King is vindicating His claims. We see His kingdom coming. He could crush His enemies with His power, but that would not be building His kingdom. He does not want subjects chained to His chariot. He wants them bound to His person and purposes by faith, by the consent of their love, by the homage of their inner lines, by the consent of their regenerated and illumined reason. So He rules gently. He comes in the light which bears the morning, in the warmth which comforts and fructifies the earth; He comes in special richness and efficacy in His Word and sacraments. But He is coming, the King of heaven, coming all the time; and His purposes are ripening fast. Are we allowing this all-glorious, all-powerful; but all-gracious King to have His way in our lives? Remember, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Will we be ready for His likeness?

This reminds us that the thought of Jesus' eternal regnancy on the throne of heaven is the source, not only of our greatest power for the present, but of our hope for the future. When we think of Jesus on the throne, we think of Him as our forerunner. Jesus in glory is the picture of what man is meant

to be, and what those who love and trust Him actually attain, when the vicissitudes of this life have ended.

Oh, the comfort of the vision of the God-man seated securely on Heaven's throne. We are still strangers and pilgrims, weary and heavy-laden. But our citizenship is in heaven. That is our fatherland. Our hearts are now in heaven, and some measure of heaven is in our hearts. And when Jesus comes to take us home we shall be like Him.

26. Christ's Return To Judgment

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. — St. Matt. 25:31—34, 41.

THE SECOND ARTICLE of the Apostles' Creed begins and ends with a statement concerning Christ's coming. The first coming is set forth in the words, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." This was the coming of the eternal Son of God in the flesh, in meekness and lowliness, to seek and save the children of men. This coming is a fact of history. We celebrate it in special manner during the Advent and Christmas season. The second coming is yet a matter of prophecy. Jesus Christ, in the adorable mystery of His Divine-human nature, is continually coming to men and nations. He is coming to comfort, strengthen and bless his people. He is coming in the events of world-history. He is coming in acts of judgment. But when the last chapter of earthly human history has been written, Jesus Christ is going to put His finis to it all by again appearing on the earth. His coming will be to give final settlement to earthly affairs; to distribute the rewards of life's labors to the children of men; to assign the finally godless, impenitent, and unbelieving to the realm of their own choosing, the state and condition toward which they have been constantly gravitating during life; to take with Him into endless life and glory all those who nurtured their lives in the sunlight of grace and truth, of which Jesus Himself is the source, the luminous and radiating center.

Let us for our morning meditation consider this subject at greater length. We will take as our subject

Christ's Return to Judgment

The Judge, the Judgment, and after the Judgment are the three points around which we shall group the more important truths which God's Word reveals to us on this absorbingly interesting and important subject.

1. The True Children of God

The true children of God have nothing to fear so far as the great Judgment is concerned, for the Judge before whom they shall appear is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Creed, after setting forth the facts of Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and the assumption of the throne of power and glory in heaven, closes the article with these words, "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." This is in perfect accord with the teaching of all Scripture. In the New Testament one passage out of approximately every twenty-five treats, in one way or another, of Christ's second coming, and the Judgment therewith connected. This is such an outstanding truth that few passages need be quoted in proof. In St. Matthew we read these words: "They shall see the Son of Man Coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (24:30, 31). In the Gospel according to St. John we read this clear statement, "The Father judgeth no men, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. ... As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (5:22, 26, 27). This was one of the fundamental truths Peter was inspired to proclaim to the gentiles in the home of Cornelius. "We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." And you will remem-

ber how the angels came to admonish the disciples, who were gazing into the heavens whence Jesus had disappeared, not to stand idly, but put their hands to the awaiting work; for “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

The Judge of all the world, then, shall be Jesus Christ, the God-man; the One who was born of the Virgin at Bethlehem, the One who bears the marks of the nails in His hands, and the scars of the pricking thorns on His brow; the One who now sits exalted on heaven’s throne. The One who came to give His life to save the world is the One who is to come to judge the world.

The world is not yet through with Jesus Christ. Many wish they were, act as if they were; it is doubtful whether there are many who, in their hearts, really believe it; if they do they are going to be disillusioned. Jesus still stands at the parting of the way for all men. And as He now, as the King of heaven, is working to apply to the souls of men His redemptive work, so He is going to return to square accounts.

When Jesus comes to judgment He is going to come visibly, with power and great glory. There will be no room then for questioning about His person, His authority, or His purpose as there was at His first coming. Men could know these things then when they wanted to, as we can know them now if we want to; in that day men cannot fail to know. In that day Jesus is going to command, not plead; and whether they want to or not they will have to obey. He is going to come in glory, not in humility; in power, not in weakness.

Brethren, are we ready to meet this Judge? Are we so using the gifts of His grace that we need not fear the manifestation of His power? Are we now so enjoying His fellowing, do we so truly know His nature, that the thought of Him in His role as Judge is free of all elements of fear? Blessed are we if it is so.

2. The Judgment

Bearing in mind the person and character of the Judge, and it is necessary for the comfort of the believing, as well as a warning for the unbelieving, that this be borne in mind, let us proceed to consider the judgment itself.

That there is to be a judgment, that all the deeds of the present life of each human being are to be weighed in the balance and adjusted in accordance with the principle of unerring justice, is a conviction as widespread as the races of men. Man's own conscience is an ineradicable witness to the fact of a coming judgment. But our certainty rests on God's revealed Word. Jesus has told us that there is to be a judgment, and that He is to be the judge. We have never seen Jesus Christ in visible form, but we shall see Him, and our first glimpse of Him will be when He comes to sit in judgment.

Guilty souls, allowing their wishes to become father to their thoughts, often deny that there will be a judgment, universal, thoroughgoing and final. The Apostle tells us of those in his day who said: "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Let us not be deceived. The world waited for millenniums for Christ's first coming, but He came. The world has waited long for His second coming, and may have to wait for centuries still, but He is going to come. Of this there can be no doubt.

In spite of the fact that the Scriptures most explicitly tells us that it is not given to the sons of men to know the time of the Judgment, that even the very angels in heaven do not know it, there has always been a great deal of speculation as to the time when it is going to take place. Individuals, and even bodies of men, have gone so far, more than once, as to set the exact day. The event has always exhibited their folly. And it will never be otherwise.

The Bible does speak of signs which are to precede Christ's coming to Judgment, but men have usually given more attention to what may be called the spectacular signs to be witnessed in the heavenly bodies and on earth, concerning which we can have no certain knowledge until they have been fulfilled; and the least to that about which, in a sense, they may know more. Jesus tells us that when the Gospel has been carried to all nations then shall be the end. When the last soul shall have been given the opportunity to accept Christ, when the last name written in the book of life has been checked off, then the end shall come. And it is going to come suddenly, and to most people unexpectedly. "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (St. Luke 12:40).

When the hour comes, set of God, but unknown to men, and angels, then Jesus the Judge will appear in the heavens, surrounded by the angel hosts.

The call shall go forth which shall effectually summon to that throne not only the living millions scattered over the face of all the earth, but awaken and bring the myriads of those who have gone to sleep the long sleep in the dust of the earth. Not one will be overlooked, not one will escape. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). The all of St. Paul means the all, as Christ says in our text, of all nations. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, with immortal natures, the quick, the living, shall be changed so as to possess the same kind of a nature.

With humanity assembled before Him, the great Judge will proceed to pass sentence. How much of the conception usually entertained about the process of carrying out the judgment will be realized I do not know, and I do not care to know. The ideas of many seem materialistic and crude. That each one will be called individually, and his whole life reviewed in detail, seems improbable. But there is going to be a real judgment. And the whole life, to the minutest detail, is going to be weighed in the unerring balance of Christ's perception of right and wrong. There may be, or there may not be, a word spoken, but each one will gravitate to his proper place. And he will know in his own deepest being that he is now where he belongs. All subterfuges will fail, all masks will be torn off; the inner recesses of the heart will be explored, all things will then appear as they are in reality. Those whom the Judge condemns will be also self-condemned. And there will probably be such a revelation of the character of each person that all about him will become conscious of the correctness of the decision.

Whatever we may think as to the details of the judgment scene, it is clear from the teaching of the Word that it is not a long drawn out millennial process; but a definite event which will take place in a comparatively brief space of time. In this limited time the eternal destiny of men and angels will be finally determined. And in some way, it will be publicly manifested; manifested by the separation which shall take place, and manifested by some kind of a proclamation from the lips of Jesus Christ, the God-man.

The rule of judgment will not be something newly revealed at the time, it will be the Word of God given to men long ago to light them on the way to heaven. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in that day" (St. John 12:48). We need be afraid of no arbitrary decrees, the character of the Judge is the sufficient guarantee of that. We shall be judged not only by the eternal principles of justice as embodied in God's holy law, but by the Gospel which tells us how the just demands of the law were met by

Jesus Christ as our substitute. Our eternal future will be decided by our relationship to the Judge Himself; by our having, or failing to have, the life which comes from Jesus Christ alone, the life which brings us, first of all, forgiveness, and then progressive renewal.

In a very real sense each one of us is now engaged in writing the sentence by which, in the judgment day, we shall be either acquitted or condemned. Jesus Christ came into the world to save all the children of men. As many as receive Him, to them He gives the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Those who truly believe, and live the life of faith, are saved; saved now, saved when they die, saved forever. Those who reject Christ, and live a life of unbelief are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. So we see that we are framing the sentence which the great Judge will pronounce on that last great day.

The sentence of Judgment will separate the children of men into two great representative classes, in which, in fact, they have always existed, — those who are for Christ, and those who are against Him. The condemned, while in the same general class, will not all be subject to the same treatment. “That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.” Among the justified, while all will be perfect and blessed, there will be degrees of glory.

3. After The Judgment

Now that we have seen who the Judge shall be, and reviewed the brief hints which the Scriptures give as to the nature of the judgment, let us consider what shall be after the judgment. On this point we shall be rather brief, because the close of the third article will demand a more explicit treatment of this subject. Here we shall give, chiefly, a few reflections to which the consideration of this serious subject ought to lead every earnest person.

After the separation which will take place automatically with the announcement of the sentence, the Judge will say to those on His left, — depart, depart to live forever the perverted, deformed life you have chosen for

yourselves. Many do not like this. They pretend to think that God can not do such a thing, that it is contrary to His loving nature. Some even proclaim that it would be unjust for Him to do so. Well, it is not for us poor worms of the dust to justify the ways of God with men. God says that it is so. The judgment settles men's destiny for all eternity. If there is an endless heaven to which we may look forward to with hope, there is a region of endless darkness and despair of which we are warned to beware. And there are some thoughts from which we could see, if we kept mindful of them, that, when God pronounces sentence, He could not do otherwise.

When Jesus pronounces the word depart, it is not an exhibition of ill-temper. He is not speaking petulantly, He is not trying to get even with those who have provoked Him. The great Judge on the throne of glory will be just as loving and compassionate as He was in His work of redemption. He who wept over the men who cursed, and betrayed, and scourged, and crucified Him, will have the same heart of pity on the judgment-day. God's sentence is never arbitrary, it never changes a man's life; it is simply a revelation of what a man's life is already. Many men are now living on reputation, the judgment sentence will be a revelation of character. The Judge can do no more than speak the truth as He finds it. Men, following Satan's leadership, have made themselves what they are; Jesus offers them the opportunity for a change, He holds before them the entrancing vision, refusing it, He can only allow them to go their way, and assign them to their place.

To those in the other class Jesus will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." These are cheering words. All admire them. All would like to hear them. But no more than the others are they words that could be other than they are. They are not words of favoritism. They are not arbitrarily spoken. Here, too, they are a revelation of character.

What now is the practical, everyday lesson which we should take to heart from the oft repeated words of our Creed, "from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead?" We might sum it all up in the two words — preparation, watchfulness. Do we want to be caught, like the five foolish virgins, slumbering, our lamps gone out, with the festal chamber closed to us; or do we want to be found like the wise virgins, our vessels filled with oil, our lamps trimmed and burning, and the door of the feast-chamber ajar?

For the unbelieving and godless, the words of the Master concerning the judgment are fraught with much of a nature to cause fear and trembling; but

for God's children they are full of encouragement. Great expectations warm the heart. With all our blessings here, both of nature and grace, there is much to discourage us. In such hours let us look up to our Brother on the throne, soon He will come to call us to share His glory. There is much of suffering, much of sorrow here; what does it matter, this brief moment of grief, if we are ready, for the endless ages, to rejoice with exceeding joy when our Lord reveals Himself in His glory? Look up, ye pilgrims of the way, look up and rejoice; for your redemption draweth nigh. But what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch!

Golladay, R. E. (1917). [Christ's Ascension]. In *Sermons on the Catechism: The Apostles' Creed* (Vol. II, pp. 236—315). Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

27. The Christian's Debt Of Gratitude

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. — 2 [Cor.] 5:14, 15.

WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING, at considerable length, the person and work of our blessed Redeemer. Everything which He did and endured had a purpose. God is never an aimless workman. So far as the Word enlightens us, there was no other purpose in all which our Saviour did and endured than to benefit mankind, and through serving and saving men to glorify the love and mercy of the everlasting Father.

The purpose of Christ's redemptive work is not set forth in so many words in the Creed itself, though it is contained in the word, "Our Lord." But the whole tenor of the second article presupposes this purpose. Luther in the explanation makes this very clear. Let us repeat again Luther's explanation to the second article: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with silver or gold, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death, that I might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity." Here we have the purpose clearly expressed, "that I may be His own, and live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." This is what we owe to our Saviour for what He has done for us. The debt is there whether we ever attempt to pay it or not. Honest people, grateful, appreciative people, try to meet their obligations. Above all other obligations, we should try to discharge those

duties which the gift of life, of salvation, imposes upon us. Let us consider today, the Christian's debt of gratitude to Christ for his redemption. It calls for

Complete Self-Surrender to Christ

When truly evangelical Christians speak of debts owed to God, it is never to be understood in this sense that we consider man capable of making an adequate return to God for what He has done for us. Salvation is not a subject of barter. All the combined efforts of all men would not suffice to purchase salvation for one soul. Salvation is God's free gift. But God has done so much for us, and is still doing so much for us, that some return ought to be made, not in the way of paying a debt; but in the form of free, loving, grateful service.

The first thing which Christ's matchless redemptive work for us should prompt us to do is to make the complete surrender of ourselves to Him. This is the purpose for which Christ lived, and wrought, and died, that we might be His own. And the highest honor that can come to any human being is to be able to say, I belong to Christ Jesus; in body, mind, and soul I belong to Him. To be in bondage to any man is a badge of shame. But the noblest spirited men who have ever lived have owned themselves the servants of Jesus, and have gloried in being known as such. Human masters often abuse their authority. And sometimes assume authority where they have none in order to use it to their own advantage. Not so with Christ Jesus. His lordship over us has but one aim, our good. For this He died; for this He lives and plans and works. Christ is a Master who rules by love, and not by force. Such a Master seeks but the good of those who submit to His rule.

Surrender to Christ! What does it mean to surrender one's self to Christ? It means to recognize the rightful sovereignty of Jesus Christ, the God-man, over our whole life. It means that His will becomes our will, the law of our life. When a person has surrendered himself to Jesus Christ it means that the ever present question of his life is, — what would Jesus have me be? What would Jesus have me do? The life surrendered to Christ brings every achievement that is worth while and lays it down as a trophy at the feet of Jesus. The Christ-surrendered life is a life which, like that of the Master, is actively interested in the welfare of others; it is an unselfishly ministering life.

Brother, sister, has the purpose, the first, the highest purpose of Christ's redemption been accomplished in us? Have we become Christ's own? Have we surrendered ourselves wholly to Him? If so, nothing we can do for Him, or his, will be a hardship. If our life has been surrendered to Christ then hatred, and malice, and unneighborliness will be foreign to our spirits; we will help to bear the infirmities of the weak, we will be patient and longsuffering.

Young people, you who are today going to make your Christian profession before all the world, what is the purpose by which you are moved? Does it mean that you are surrendering your life to the Saviour to be ruled by Him? Is He your only hope of salvation? Is His Word the content of your faith, and your rule of conduct? Is He to be the great example for your imitation? Do you know, and is it your purpose increasingly to know, the Master's mind and the Master's spirit? Are you, like the Saviour, willing to be humble, obedient, patient, loving, forgiving, helpful? Are you, like the Master, willing to practice these virtues toward the froward, impertinent, and ungracious also? This, all this, is what your step should mean.

When we are Christians we no longer belong to ourselves. We have been bought with a price. We belong to Christ. We are not to live for ourselves, to do our own will, to pursue our own whims, but to live for Christ, to do His will.

And who is so worthy of lordship over us as is Jesus Christ? Who so deserves our praise? History tells us of many persons of worthy character, who have rendered splendid service to their brethren of mankind. We honor humanity, we do ourselves an honor, when we honor such worthy people. But not one of them is comparable to Jesus Christ. As the splendor of the noonday sun exceeds the feeble rays of a wax taper, so does the character of Jesus exceed the character of the noblest of the mere children of men. And of all the elements of His character, the most sublimely splendid was that of his condescending love, and the service it prompted. Christ's sufferings and death, which some regard as only the unfortunate sequel of a struggle for great ends, which others regard as simply an example of the way we should all be willing to make the supreme sacrifice for an ideal, was in reality the sublimest spectacle on which the heavens ever looked down. It was the God-man, in the fullness of His power, wisdom, and love choosing the way of service, of the cross, that thereby a world-wide human emancipation might be wrought. It was the Lord of glory dying to save the children who

had sold themselves into a foul, debasing slavery. And now that He has secured our release, broken our fetters, healed our wounds, cleansed us of the marks of base servitude, clothed us with the robe of sonship which admits us into the ranks of His own Father's children, do we not owe Him something? Though He is a brother, as well as a Lord, do we not owe Him reverence, and humble service? This is the plea of our text. It is the plea of all the Gospel.

Let us further notice that our debt of gratitude calls for active

Membership in Christ's Kingdom

Jesus, by His redemptive work, purchased us to "live under Him in His Kingdom." It is by the Spirit-wrought surrender of ourselves to Christ that we become members of this Kingdom, so that this subject is in reality contained in the former one; but there are some additional points of such importance that it will be time well spent if we give them a special emphasis.

Christ's Kingdom of power extends over all things, and all things will some of these days have to acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. But unquestionably the Kingdom here meant is the Kingdom Jesus died to establish, the Kingdom of Grace, the Christian Church. This Kingdom Luther calls, as the inspired Word calls it, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It was not established by any man; it does not belong to any man, or body of men; men have no right to dictate its principles; it is the Kingdom of Jesus, the Son of God.

The Second Article of the Creed tells us that Jesus Christ came into the world; He lived, and died; He conquered sin, and death, and hell, in order to establish this Kingdom, in order to bring you and me, and all men, into this Kingdom. It is the only Kingdom in which men are trained in spiritual citizenship. It is the only Kingdom from which men are promoted to the heavenly Kingdom. My friend, are you in this Kingdom? If not you are allowing Jesus to have lived, and died in vain so far as you are individually concerned. And you are doing despite to that love of Jesus which yearns for you as a mother yearns for her child.

There are some thoughts equally as serious for those of us who are professedly in this Kingdom. Remember, the concluding part of the explanation to the Second Article tells us that Christ's work was done with this one

end in view, that we might live under Him. To live under Jesus Christ! Do I need to explain what that means? It means to own Jesus as our King. It means to be ruled by His authority. Is this true of us as members of Christ's Kingdom? Do we think as much about Jesus Christ, the King and Saviour of our souls, as we do about the rulers of earth? Are we as careful about infringing on His holy laws as we are about violating the laws of the land in which we live? Are we as zealous in reverencing Jesus as we are in honoring those who have distinguished themselves in the affairs of our civil government? Most of us would feel most highly honored if we could contrive in some way to receive a missive from the president of our country, and would preserve it as a precious memento. Jesus Christ, the King of kings, has gone to the trouble to have written to us letter after letter, in which He reveals to us the deepest thoughts of His mind, the tenderest feelings of His heart. And He has signed and sealed it, not with ink, but with His own blood. Do we reverence this message? Not in a superstitious way, not to the extent of costly bindings and imposing clasps; but by prayerful study and meditation? Are we always, when possible, in the house of God, where the letters of Jesus are read and explained; and praise and thanksgiving rendered for them?

Those who live under Jesus in His great, blessed Kingdom do not live alone. There are other members of this Kingdom; and these members all form a family. All these members, who are, at the same time, brethren and children of the King, are to honor and serve the King by honoring and serving their brethren of the great household. Some are weak brethren, and the Master says: "Bear ye one another's burdens. And again," "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. . . . For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me" (Rom. 15:1, 3). Again, this King of our says: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:13, 35). Fellow citizens of the Kingdom, are we showing to the world by the uprightness of our lives, by the considerateness with which we treat our brethren, even the thoughtless, the inconsiderate, and those lacking self-control, that we are living in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ? And that we have the spirit of Jesus in our hearts?

Young people is this an outline, it is, indeed, but a very brief outline, of what Church-membership means to you? Are you going to allow Jesus to rule in your minds and in your hearts? Are you going to serve Him in serving humanity? That is what your promises mean. To live up to them, to allow Jesus to have His way in your lives is the surest way to a useful, respected, honored manhood and womanhood. To take Jesus Christ as your King, to surrender yourselves wholly to Him, does not mean the loss of the brightness and beauty of youth. It means the directing of your energies into right channels. It means the avoidance of pitfalls. It means the addition to your lives of more than mortal power for the eradication of evil impulses and tendencies, and the implanting and unfolding of all that makes human life beautiful and worth while.

Our debt of Christian gratitude will never be fully discharged. Eternity will be too short to pay it. This debt, therefore calls for continued

Service in the Realm of Glory

Christ's redemptive work was not only to achieve a temporary purpose. It has results, indeed, for this world. Sad would be our condition were this not true. There has never been another power in this world so potent for the general good of humanity as the cross of Christ. It has made it possible for the great burden of guilt-consciousness to be lifted from human souls. At the same time it takes the sting out of all our crosses, making our yoke easy, and our burden light. Where the burdens cannot be altogether removed, the cross of Christ changes them into blessings. The cross of Christ is the tree which sweetens the Marah's of life (Exod. 15:23). But Christ purchased and won us for something beyond this world. The effects of His redemptive work extend beyond the border of time into eternity.

Christ's life went from Bethlehem, by way of Calvary, to Olivet, and the eternal throne of glory. And those who surrender themselves to Christ, and serve Him here below in His Kingdom of grace, unite their lives and their destinies with His, and are carried by Him into the Kingdom of bliss and glory.

In the Kingdom of glory, and fully realized bliss, the life of the redeemed is still to be a service rendered to Christ. But it will be a service different from that rendered now. Here it is fragmentary, there it will be per-

fect. Here even our righteousneses, our good deeds, are like stained and tattered garments; there all shall be in the beauty of holiness. Here the word service ordinarily bears something of the sense of drudgery. Though even here below when service is rendered to a cause or a person we love it loses the sense of drudgery, and comes near being a beatitude. So up there our service shall be like that of the angels, not a burden producing weariness; but the natural, exuberant, joyous expression of our new life, with its God-filled love and energy.

This, brethren, is the purpose for which we have been redeemed. This is the final meaning of our faith and our service. And if we live for Christ now, we shall live with Him then. If in our moments of spiritual transport, which are after all the sanest moments of our lives, when our feeble vision is borne aloft on the wings of faith to view the beauties and blessings prepared for those who love the Lord, we are lost in wonder, love, and praise, what shall be our experiences when, with unclouded eyes, we are given the beatific vision?

"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour Divine:
Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away,
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

"May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be,
A living fire.

"When ends life's transient dream,
When death's cold, sullen stream
Shall o'er me roll,
Blest Saviour, then, in love,
Fear and distrust remove;
O bear me safe above,
A ransomed soul."

The Third Article

28. I Believe In The Holy Ghost

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. ... It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. — St. John 14:26; 16:7, 8.

THE THREE MOST FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENTS of all the fundamental statements of the Apostles' Creed are these, I believe in God the Father almighty; ... and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; ... I believe in the Holy Ghost." And, as you will remember, these brief statements are an expansion of the simple statement of the names of the three persons of the holy Trinity, in the baptismal formula out of which the Creed was gradually developed.

The first two of these elemental confessional statements we have considered. We now take up the final article of this statement of our faith. May the One of whom we are treating, the Spirit of truth, without whose presence and aid no spiritual truth can be rightly understood, or become operative in our lives, grant us His enlightening presence to guide us into the truth concerning Himself.

As the days of Christ's visible sojourn with his disciples began to draw to a close, He began to give them promises of a nature to cheer and strengthen them. The Master knew the confused condition of their minds, the vacillating state of their souls. He knew the harrowing experiences through which they would have to pass, and the depressing effect it would have on them. To counteract all this, to stay their sinking spirits, to give them something as an anchor for hope when all seemed hopeless, Jesus tells them that it was really necessary for Him to go away; that by going away,

as to His visible presence, He would send them One to take His place, to guide them into the truth, to give them a better understanding of Himself, His nature and His mission.

This promise was signally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. What the coming of the Holy Spirit meant to the Apostles is known to all careful students of the Scriptures. What His presence means to the Church of God to this day is tersely set forth in this third article. For our introductory message, we will take as our subject the first sentence of this part of our confession.

I Believe in the Holy Ghost

Let us consider the content of our faith with respect to the person of the Holy Spirit. His work, and the means through which He works.

1. Who He Is

“I believe in the Holy Ghost.” This is our oft repeated confession. The first question to interest an inquiring mind to which a proposition of this kind is presented will naturally be, Who is the Holy Ghost? What is the nature of the One in whom we believe, or are ask to believe? Like the kindred problems of the First and Second Articles, this is a deep subject. No mere human mind can follow it very far without reaching depths no human wisdom can sound. But as with other subjects Divine, what needs to be known can be known, and pains should be taken to know it. This is not a matter of indifference. Just as those who have not Christ cannot truly have the Father, so those who have not the Holy Spirit have neither the Son nor the Father.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost. What mental images do these words call up? Or are they mere words which leave the mind shrouded in an impenetrable haze? No one can have read the Bible even casually, or attended the services of a Christian Church occasionally, or intermittently glanced at the literature of the Christian Church, without being familiar with the name Holy Ghost. We can scarcely conceive that today the merest hanger-on of the Christian Church would have to confess, with the disciples of Ephesus.”We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2). But doubtless not a few professing Christians, if they were

asked to tell what they know about the Holy Spirit, could put their fund of knowledge in very few words. And not a few of those who would speak volubly would show to informed hearers that they were drawing on their imagination, rather than from a certified source of knowledge. This condition ought not be true of any Christian, least of all should it be true of any Lutheran Christian; for from Childhood most of us have been carefully taught these truths. To have forgotten them is all the more culpable.

The word spirit is in quite general use. When we wish to set forth the dominating characteristics of a person, or the principles by which he is actuated, we speak of it as the spirit of the man. The tendencies which crop out in the life of an age, or a nation, is called the manifestation of its spirit. In defining the character or influence of a book, or the literature or art of a period, we call it the spirit which pervades it. We speak even of the spirit of nature. The life which pervades it, the effect it makes on us by its wonders and its beauties, these are often called its spirit. Not widely different, sometimes not at all different, are the ideas entertained respecting the Holy Spirit, His nature and operations. The influences made on us by the good and beautiful; the things which broaden, enlighten, uplift in a general way, this is the Holy Spirit, in their view. Quite distinct from this is the teaching of God's Word with respect to the Holy Ghost.

When we say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, it means, or should mean, that we understand the Holy Ghost to be a distinct person of the Godhead. This is the unmistakable teaching of God's Word throughout. Wherever the names of the Godhead are conjoined, as, for instance, in the doxology, and in the baptismal formula, they are presented in such way that the only natural conclusion is that they are coequal members. Read carefully the statements of Christ concerning the Holy Spirit in St. John, chapters fourteen to sixteen. Notice how insistently and significantly He uses the personal pronoun in speaking of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost He shall teach, He shall glorify, He shall convict. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, tells them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18). Grief cannot be felt by a breath, or influence; but only by a person. In the letter to the Corinthians, after enumerating the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle says: "All these worketh the self-same Spirit, distributing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11). Here, in addition to using the pronoun of person, the Apostle affirms of the Holy Spirit that He has the power of personal choice, of will. When the Church at Antioch was awaiting directions

from on high as to her future activities, the Apostle tells us that it was told them by the Holy Ghost. “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, so they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed” (Acts 13:1—4). Here we have not only the same use of the personal pronoun; but the statement of the fact that the Holy Ghost has the right of decision in matters of great import to the Church. At the baptism of Jesus it was manifested to the natural senses of man that God exists in a threefold personality. The Father speaking audibly from heaven, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being present to sight.

Indeed, the Scriptures being our teacher, there can be no other conclusion than this that the Holy Ghost is co-equal to the Father and the Son as to His Godhead, and that as truly as they He exists in a separate person. In the Apostles’ Creed there is no express statement concerning the holy Trinity, but its very form is trinitarian, and at every step enlarges upon, and emphasis our faith in the essential oneness of God; and that in the oneness of essence there are three persons. All that can be affirmed of the Father as to His Godhead must be affirmed of Christ. All that can be affirmed of the Father and the Son as to Godhead must be affirmed of the Holy Ghost. They are all of the same substance; equal in wisdom, power, and glory. The Father eternal and unbegotten; the Son eternal, but begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternal, but proceeding from the Father and the Son.

2. His Work

“I believe in the Holy Ghost.” It means much to be able to say this in the sense in which we have so far outlined it, to know Him as one of the equal members of the family of the Deity; but this is not yet enough. As no one truly knows the Father till he knows Him in His relation to the universe, as his own creator and keeper; nor the Son of God till he knows Him as the Redeemer of the race, and His own personal Saviour, so no one truly knows the Holy Ghost till he knows His work, till he knows His work as it is revealed in God’s Word, and experienced in his own soul. Let us then, in the second place, consider the work of the Holy Ghost.

The work of the Holy Ghost was not unknown to the people of the Old Testament. They knew that He took part in the work of creation, that it was due to His power that kosmos came out of the original chaos, and that all

was crowned with beauty and fruitfulness. We are told that in the times preceding the deluge, the Spirit of God was striving with men; to turn them from their wickedness, to incline them to God's ways. During the centuries of God's special covenant relation to Israel, the way of life was clarified for them by the words of law-givers, psalmists, prophets, and historians. The words of these men were beacon lights to show the way to heaven, and not only in those days, they are still aglow with Divine radiance to light men on the way to glory. Such a literature is to be accounted for, not by any mere human process of culture. Thus does the Word explain its origin, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It was the work of the Holy Spirit. In all that olden time the third person of the Holy Trinity had his full share in shaping and controlling the destinies of mankind.

It is, however, in New Testament times that the Holy Spirit has come, so to speak, into His own. The Gospel era, the time since the ascension of Jesus Christ, is, in a distinctive sense, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The Creed carries us right on into the distinctive sphere of the Holy Spirit's operations, as well as names some of the results of these operations, when it says: "I believe in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting." The Christian Church, not only in its birth on the day of Pentecost, but in every stage of its development since then, and every phase and feature of its many victories since that day, is the direct result of the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. This has all been aptly and concisely set forth by Luther in his explanation of the Third Article. These words are so thoroughly scriptural, so intelligible, so fundamental to a right spiritual life, that having learned them, we should ever treasure them as a precious possession of mind and heart. Can we still all repeat them? Let us see: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith: even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the last day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life." This is the specific work of the Holy Ghost. It has always been His particular work. But it was never carried on in such a distinctive manner as since the completion of Christ's redemptive work, and

that miraculous outpouring on Pentecost. It is a work which not only goes back through nineteen hundred years of history, but is as efficacious today as it was in the earliest century, and will not diminish in efficacy, nor decrease in intensity, till the last roll is called, and all the elect have entered on the blessedness of eternal life.

The work of the Holy Spirit is co-extensive with all the activities carried on for the Church, in the Church, and by the Church that really furthers the Kingdom of God. Jesus summarizes this work, in our text, under three heads. He says, the Holy Spirit, when I send Him, shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Gospel message is the deeper meaning it attaches to the fact of sin. Aside from the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, the world has scarcely no conception of the real inwardness, and awfulness of sin, or of the universal ravage of which it is the cause. It is only as the Spirit gives to men an adequate conception of sin, that they can entertain right ideas concerning Christ Jesus, and man's great need of Him. It is only as a man understands the damning, ruinous nature of sin that he can begin to appreciate the righteousness which Jesus Christ has prepared for those who believe. A righteousness which obliterates all the unrighteousness of those who accept it, and makes them righteous as Christ is righteous; for it is His own righteousness which He, through the Spirit, gives to the believer. And clothed upon with the perfect righteousness of Christ, we, indeed, become convinced that there is a Divine judgment, a judgment which is now a process of eliminating the good from the evil, a judgment which will be the proclamation of final conditions; but as the certainty of this judgment grows, the fear of it diminishes, because knowing the Judge and what He has done for us, we are assured of our safety. This also is what it means when we say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

3. His Means

It is a wonderful work the Holy Spirit has been doing in the world, especially these nineteen hundred years. It is the greatest, and, even so far as the benefits to this present life are concerned, the most beneficent the world has ever witnessed. Let us, then, devote a few moments to considering the means through which this work has been wrought, and is still being carried

on. We shall here give but a brief survey of the subject, for we shall have occasion to consider it more in detail at another time.

The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is one of the persons of the Godhead. God is subject to no laws of limitation save the law of His own being, the law of truth. The Holy Spirit is not bound to work in anyone way, or through any given set of means. He need not use any means or agent at all. But for our good, to guard us against deception, that we may have at our hand the means of enlightenment, God has given us a body of revealed truth, all needed truth, — this is His Word. The Holy Spirit is the One through whose special activity this Word was given us. And now He honors His Word by using it as the means through which He works for our salvation. This Word of God was not only given by the activity of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:12); it is not only the revelation of His will, the deep things of His counsel (1 Cor. 2:10); but the Word is for us the body in which the Spirit dwells, and through which He operates. There is a sense in which the Holy Spirit is incarnate in the Word as the eternal Son was incarnate in Jesus the Son of Mary. The Word was written not only by inspired men, but the Word itself is inspired. God breathed through the writers, and now He breathes through the writing; the writing breathes God, God the Holy Ghost. He is ever present in the Word to kindle and nourish spiritual life, to sanctify and save. This explains why the Word is called “spirit and life;” this is why it is the “the power of God unto salvation.”

Knowing these truths, how diligently and prayerfully we should make use of God’s Word! How we ought to allow ourselves to be taken captive in the embracing arms of the Holy Spirit, who more and more would bind and cast out the old man, with his spiritual ignorance and lusts, and more and more build up the new man in spiritual knowledge and heavenly graces. In view of these facts, how diligently we should labor to bring this light and life bearing Word to all those who have not yet learned to know it, to at least give them the opportunity to share with us the blessings of Christ’s salvation. This also is included in our confession. “I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

“Come, Holy Spirit, Come;
Let Thy bright beams arise;
Dispel the sorrow from our minds,
The darkness from our eyes.
Dwell, Spirit, in our hearts;
Our minds from bondage free;
Then shall we know and praise and love,
The Father, Son, and Thee.”

29. The Holy Spirit's Work

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord; but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. 12:3.

When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. — St. John 16:13.

EVEN THOSE PEOPLE who never heard of God's inspired Revelation of Himself believe in a supreme, overruling Being. Only the fool says in his heart, there is no God. And some of these heathen people called their god, the Great Spirit. Hereby indicating something of their conception of the nature and the character of the operations, of their god. We Christians believe that there is a God one of the persons of which Being is properly called the Holy Spirit. We believe that He is the third person of the holy Trinity, that He is co-equal with the Father and the Son in all that makes each of these persons God. We believe also that the Holy Spirit is an equal partner in all the great and multiplied activities whereby the universe was produced, and is controlled. We further believe that the Holy Spirit, as is the case with the other members of the family of the Deity, has a particular work to perform, especially with respect to the carrying out of the plan whereby the children of men are to be saved.

In our introductory sermon on the third Article, we considered the person of the Holy Spirit, and, in a general way, His work. There is much more which an intelligent confession of this part of our Creed should embrace than it was possible to set forth in that one address. Especially does this apply to the work of the Holy Spirit. Today, then, we will continue this line of thought. We will take as our subject,

The Holy Spirit's Work

The necessity of this work, and the steps in its progress are the points under which our thoughts will be grouped.

1. An Absolute Necessity

The work of the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity in the plan of salvation. Without this work no one can be saved. This is the unmistakable teaching of God's Word.

In what way can we speak of an absolute necessity of the Spirit's work? Is there an implication in this statement to the effect that Christ's work for our salvation is in any way lacking? that in extent, or efficacy, it needs to be supplemented? Not in the least. Jesus is the world's only Saviour. Never has there been, never will there be another. And His work for man's salvation was complete. Not a jot or tittle needs to be added to what He has done in order to make it effective. Throughout all ages Jesus stands at the portal of that narrow way which leads to heaven, and says: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He has made complete satisfaction for our sins. He has prepared for us a perfect righteousness. The dying thief on the cross, who in penitence and faith, clung to Christ in his extremity, received that which not only healed the wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores of his moral and spiritual life; but gave him that adornment of the inner life without which no one can stand approved before the throne of God. That which was all-sufficient for the poor malefactor will be efficacious for every one. Nothing more is needed. Nothing less will do.

But that there is only one way of coming into possession of Christ, and all that He has wrought for our salvation, is also clearly revealed. It is alone by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Everywhere throughout the Gospel reverberates the cry, "repent and believe the Gospel." Everywhere, in one or another form, stands written the promise: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). And to preclude all thought of the worth of anything we can do, so far as meriting salvation is concerned, as well as the thought of the possible existence of some other method of appropriating the benefits of Christ, it is written: "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28).

If Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind; if what He has done, without any possible addition from any possible source, is sufficient for man's salvation; if all that is needed for the appropriation of Christ, and all His blessings, is simply to take it by faith; then the question may recur, with

renewed intensity, — what necessity can there be in the plan of salvation for the presence and work of the Holy Spirit? Just a little patient study of God's holy Word, just a little observation with grace enlightened eyes, will suffice to make this point clear. Salvation full and free has been prepared by Christ, is found in Him, and received with Him. The only hand which can take the gift is faith. But faith is not a natural or inherent gift or possession of man. The capacity for faith is in every human soul, but it is not self-generated or developed, as are the faculties of the mind. Faith is not a natural attribute of the present inner-life, lying dormant, to be awakened by the proper environment, as are the emotions of anger and human love. It is not an acquisition to be purchased at any price. Faith is not plucked by a little human exertion, as a flower, from the garden of the heavenly graces. The natural man is blind, deaf and dumb to spiritual things, and this includes faith. Faith is not only the means whereby man passes through the portal into the kingdom of grace, faith is itself a gift of grace. In man's original state of integrity he unquestionably lived in the sphere of faith, his whole life was a life of faith, of receptive dependence on God; but when sin came faith died. And man has now no power of begetting it again. We are now dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). This is the reason we confess, as the Third Article teaches us, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to Him." This is not a flattering confession. Many do not like to make it. Some will not make it. But it is the truth of all Scripture, and of enlightened experience as well.

Corroboration of the truth of this condition we find everywhere, on the pages of all history, sacred as well as secular. Everywhere, in past and present times, the world has been full of people eagerly alive to the opportunities which the world affords, pleasure and gain; but averse, wholly dead, to the things of God. Among these people we find those of great native gifts, capable of worthy achievement; but in their lives no evidence of the operation of the Divine. Even Christian people, or those professedly so, give abundant evidence of the natural incapacity of the unaided human heart for the things of the Spirit. In spite of all that God the Holy Spirit has done for them, and is still striving to do in them, how weak, often, is our faith, how lethargic is our spiritual life; how slothful we are in doing the Spirit's work. Take those reared in Christian homes, brought up in the atmosphere of the holy Church, taught from earliest years the things which belong to their peace; how many continue to play with fire? and to walk on

the ragged edge of the precipice where lurk the deadly perils? How difficult it is to win them to the paths which are sane and safe. Even among the really sober minded, who have caught visions of the light of heavenly truth, who have heartily chosen the better part, how great the still inherent weakness, how frequent the failures. Everything everywhere in human life substantiates the Scripture teaching that man is by nature spiritually dead, that a new life must be begotten in him. This is the reason Jesus says: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (St. John 3:3, 5). This is the reason Jesus says, through the Apostle, "No man can say, say believingly, with an appropriating faith," that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost." The perfect salvation in Christ Jesus awaits us, but the organ of appropriation is wanting. It must be created, begotten, by God. And this work He does in the person of the Holy Spirit. In this sense we speak of the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work to our salvation.

What would it profit a helplessly paralyzed man if there was a mountain of purest gold only three feet from him, if the condition was that he had personally to appropriate it, and carry it away. No doubt there are incalculable treasures of gold hidden in the recesses of the earth. What good does it do us while we are ignorant of its existence? What good does the heaven and earth filling riches of Christ do those who are ignorant of His true value, or dead to all power of appropriation? To give us the eyes to see, the heart to appreciate, and the hand of faith to grasp the riches in Christ Jesus, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself tells us that it was largely His mission, on going back to heaven, to send the Holy Spirit to teach us all things, to lead us into all truth; that is, of course, all truth needful for our salvation. And with the Holy Spirit's teaching there comes the power to accept what is taught. No one, without the help of the Holy Spirit, can say that Jesus is the Christ; but with his help all can say it, and He wants to help every one to say it.

2. The Steps Involved

The steps in the progress of the Holy Spirit's work in bringing men into sonship and heirship in the Kingdom of God is the next point to which we will give our attention.

The first step in the process of bringing the spiritually dead to life and the aliens to membership in God's kingdom is the proclamation of God's desire that it should be done, and that He has made all provisions by which it may be done. And to this end He sends forth His call.

In all ages, from the time our first parents banished themselves from God's garden, God has been having this call proclaimed. The priests and prophets of Israel were constantly delivering the message the heart of which was always God's call. It may have come with the thunders of Sinai, but the heart of it was always the message of mercy. They ministered chiefly to the chosen people, but the message was not confined to them. There were times when it was sent directly to others. And in one way or another, it was always percolating out to the farthest confines of the races of men.

When Jesus came He was Himself the clearest call God had ever given the children of men to come to Him. In Jesus the world was privileged to see the glory of God's grace as well as His truth. And as He went about on earth He was constantly inviting, urging men to come to Him that He might enrich them by the bestowal of His blessings. When He said, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," it was the strongest kind of an invitation to men to come and find in Him all their souls needed. The Saviour was constantly emphasizing the fact that His call was for all, that all were welcome, were really wanted. In the parable of the wedding feast He shows how deeply grieved He is at the empty seats. He kept constantly urging his servants to renewed exertions in their efforts to find other guests. And after each new accession, the plaintive announcement went forth, "and yet there is room." And that there might be no shadow of doubt as to the inclusiveness of His invitation, He says: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This work of calling the children of men into God's kingdom is still going on. The Church of God has been commissioned to continue the work. Christ's last commission was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." This duty still rests on the Church, on the Church as a whole, and on each member of it. And we are not faithful to our Lord, not faithful to the Church of God, not faithful to our own profession, not faithful toward those who need our help, when we refuse, or neglect, to help discharge this duty.

Where ever the truths of God's Word are preached there the Holy Spirit is present to make it effective. Without this nothing would be accomplished by all the preaching that could be done, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). "The carnal," that is, the natural, fleshly, "mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). In distinctively spiritual things we have no will to chose that which is good. Where the Spirit of the Lord operates there alone comes liberty, the power of spiritual choice (2 Cor. 3:17), — for, as we have seen, no one can say, believingly that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost.

The Gospel call, though always accompanied by the Holy Spirit with all His converting power, is not irresistible. Men always have the power of resistance. "And ye would not" is the lament which even wounded omnipotence must often make. But this call is never wholly in vain. Some are always won for God's Kingdom. So that with the Lord's invitation there goes, hand in hand, a constant gathering of souls as recruits for the Lord's army. Wherever God's Word is preached forces are set into operation, forces of attraction or repulsion. As a result, there is soon a separation of elements. These who are only embittered and hardened withdraw, or appear only to oppose; those who are attracted, who begin to recognize in what God offers in His message that which fits to the needs of their souls, come out more and more decidedly on God's side. A community of God's children is established. All, let it be constantly borne in mind, the result of the operation of the Spirit of God, brought to bear on the minds and hearts of men through the preaching and teaching of God's Word, and the administration of the Divinely ordained sacraments.

It is impossible to draw positive lines of distinction between the successive steps of the Holy Spirit's work in men's hearts. Indeed, many of them are going on concurrently. Sometimes there is a certain reaction; a certain operation of God's Spirit on our spirit produces a result, and that result opens the way for still larger results. This is particularly true with that step which we call enlightenment. The first step is a call to the spiritually dead. With this call there always goes what is often called a prevenient grace; the deadness, the inertness, the positive attitude of repulsion is, for the time being at least, removed. It is made possible for the one to whom the call comes to accept. At first he sees spiritual things much after the fashion of

the blind man who, after Christ's first application, saw men as trees walking. He has at least a vague impression of the awfulness of his sinful condition. And a faint and faltering vision of the good things offered him. There is the possibility at least of his asking, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

We might call this an enlightenment. In comparison with the unutterable darkness which prevailed before it would not be without justification; but it is enlightenment only as the mastery of the alphabet opens the way to the great field of literature. The child that has just laboriously learned to read a few sentences in its primer has not gone very far in comparison with a Shakspeare or a Goethe; but these men began in this way, and without it they could not have reached their later estate. So with our Christian life. The first faint, flickering consciousness of sin; the first dimly seen vision of Jesus as a Saviour; the first faint heartbeat of a desire to be rid of the darkness and to live in the light; this is the beginning of enlightenment. If this laying hold of Christ is real it will suffice to save, for it is not the strength of the grasp, but the object grasped, which saves. Yet, this initial step should be followed by successive steps continuing while life lasts; the result of which is an ever growing appreciation of the preciousness of the Gospel, the fulness of God's love, the perfection of Christ's righteousness, and the blessedness of the life hid with Christ in God. So that it can be said of us, as of the Ephesians: "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (5:8).

The result of this life of ever growing faith and knowledge will be a life brought more and more into conformity to the pattern Christ has set before us in word and example. Of this we shall have more to say later, but let us remember that it is written that those, and those only, who "are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). And this leading has special reference here to the Christian life.

Brethren, these are no abstract, speculative truths of which we are treating; they are vital to the Christian life, vital as the rain and the sunshine are to vegetable life. They are truths which have to do with the genesis of the Christian life, but they are not only for our Christian childhood, but vital yet for the ripest Christian manhood and womanhood. Are we vitally interested in them?

I doubt not that the early disciples, in spite of their lack of understanding, and exhibitions of weakness, had as large a measure of the Holy Spirit when they stood on Olivet as the average Christian of today; but they went

back to Jerusalem to wait, and watch, and pray for His larger coming. We have no right to expect a new Pentecost, that was a miraculous gift for a special purpose; but every needed measure of the Holy Spirit God is anxious to bestow. Are we anxious to have Him? Do we pray for His coming? Do we use the Word through which He operates, and thus give Him a chance to answer our prayers? Do we yield to His gracious solicitations? This is the only way to growth in grace.

"Gracious Spirit! Love Divine!
Let Thy light within me shine;
All my guilty fears remove;
Fill me with Thy heav'nly love.

"Let me never from Thee stray;
Keep me in the narrow way;
Fill my soul with joy divine;
Keep me, Lord, forever Thine."

30. Justification

There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. — Rom. 3:23—25, 28.

THE SCRIPTURES TEACH, and in the explanation to the Third Article we confess, that man can do nothing toward bringing about his salvation, or keeping it when brought to him. He is not only dead in sin, as to spiritual things he is worse than a black or stone, for there is in the natural man aversion for spiritual things and opposition to them. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Faith, the organ, or spiritual hand, through which all spiritual gifts of God are received and retained, must be given to man. This new life, this new vision and grasp of things spiritual, as to its inception and culture, is the result of the operation on man’s spirit of God the Holy Spirit. This change in man’s condition is called regeneration because it marks the actual begetting of a new spiritual life; it is called conversion because the one in whom this life is begotten is turned from darkness to life, from sin to righteousness, from the world and self and Satan to God.

The fact of conversion, as to its essential nature, is always the same, — the begetting of a new life; the efficient agent in the begetting of this new life is always the same, — God the Holy Spirit; the instrumental means, so far as we know, are now always the same, — God’s Word and the holy sacraments. The experiences, however, of those in whom this new life is begotten are not always the same. Some are begotten as falls the dew of heaven, gently and quietly; some come into this newness of life through greater or less convulsions of their nature. A few there are who quickly come into considerable clearness of vision, and get a fairly firm grasp of the fundamental eternal verities; many there are who, for years, dwell in the twilight zone of half-vision, and troublesome fears.

For all, especially for those harassed by doubts and fears, God has given us a very precious doctrine in His Gospel. And we consider this the logical point for its presentation. In the process of man's spiritual development there comes a time when God steps in to perform an act which always changes the whole relationship between man and Himself. This act is not mentioned in the Creed, nor yet, specifically, in the terse explanation of Luther; but it is implied in both. This act of God the Scriptures, and our Confessions, drawn therefrom, call justification. This doctrine is the source of the greatest comfort and strength to all those who rightly understand it. Today we are going to treat of this precious biblical doctrine of Justification.

Before we proceed, I want to call your attention to the definition of justification as given in our Catechism. I trust you all still remember it, if not do not let the sun go down today without hunting up your old catechism and recommitting it so it will never be forgotten. Here it is, "Justification is that act of God, by which, He of pure grace, for the sake of the merits of Christ, pronounces a poor sinner, who truly believes in Christ, free from guilt and declares him just."

1. The Subjects

In the light of our text, and this definition, let us consider, first of all, the subjects of this act of God.

Those on whom the act of justification is wrought are sinners. But it is not the mere fact of being a sinner that brings justification, for then would all be justified. Only those are justified who are poor sinners; who recognize their sinfulness, lament their ruined condition, and in faith flee to the refuge set before them in Jesus Christ.

The first thing the Holy Spirit has to do in man's life, if he is to become a justified child of God, is to convince him of his sinful condition, and the sentence of condemnation which rests on him in consequence. This is not an easy thing to do. Man is by nature proud, self-sufficient; not humble. Man wants to stand acquitted, justified; but on the ground of his own supposed innocence, and good works, as was the case with the pharisee in the Gospel story.

Let us look for a moment at our text. It is but one of many similar ones. But we will pin our attention to this one that it may become fixed in our minds. Remember, it is God who is speaking through his Apostle. His words cut, but He wounds only that He may heal, He humbles only that He may be able to exalt. Now what does God say? "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." David as well as bloody Ahab, Paul the Apostle as well as Saul the persecutor, Simeon as well as the thief on the cross, Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena as well as Sir George Jeffreys, you and I as well as the criminal languishing for foul crimes in the cell under sentence of condemnation; by nature all are sinners, deserving the wrath of God, and under sentence of His condemnation. A man may be born an aristocrat of the aristocrats, heir of the wealth of a Croesus, reared in the atmosphere of utmost culture, a lover of the beautiful in literature and art, loathing everything coarse and cruel; and yet it is writing, at God's dictation: "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Not all are murderers, or thieves, or adulterers in the gross, vulgar sense of the word; but in thought and affection we have all offended even here. And this is sin. There is a difference as to the character and degree of sin. Some are gross offenders, some less gross. Some owe fifty pieces, some eighty, some a hundred; but all have offended, for there is no difference as to the fundamental fact of sinfulness. If there is only cold indifference toward God, only a lack of love for Him, and trust in Him it is enough. This, too, is sin; and sin of crimson hue. And if we had only once in life offended, that would be enough, that one offense would break the golden chain of God's holy law, and make us guilty of all. There is no difference; for all have sinned. This is God's declaration.

There may be room for discussion as to the relative guilt of our first parents in that first great transgression; but both were banished from Paradise, and both received the sentence of death. When the flood came as a punishment for sin, no doubt there was some difference in the people. Some were gross sinners, some were aesthetic in their tastes, and passed as respectable citizens; but the waters devoured them all with the exception of the eight penitent and believing ones. Why was this so? God gives the answer, "there is no difference, for all have sinned."

It does not avail that men say, but I do not feel that I am a sinner. I have always tried to do what was right. And my neighbors have always respected

me, and given me a good name. It does not matter how we feel, or what men say. God says, "there is no difference, for all have sinned." And until God is allowed to have His way nothing can be done for us. Let us not resist the operations of the Holy Spirit. Let us allow Him to hold up for us the mirror of His holy law. It will reveal to us our real condition, sinners, miserable sinners, resting under the just condemnation of holy God. One of England's former great preachers started out in his ministry as a decided rationalist and unitarian. He was inclined to rail at such passages as our text, but study of the Word brought him to a clear understanding of their full truthfulness. And he confessed that even in his former days, down deep in his inner life, he was conscious that these words painted a life-size portrait of himself. So it must be with all of us. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And all sin, every sin, big or little, which is loved, lived in, unrepented of, condemns, and severs from fellowship with God.

But the mere consciousness of sin is not enough. All the world, deep down in its inner consciousness, knows there is something wrong. And though many everywhere oppose the biblical teaching of sin when it is brought home to them in an individual manner; still, everywhere, in lands heathen and civilized, there are abundant evidences of the presence of a dark gnawing fear, the fear of the consequences of sin. But neither the consciousness of sin, nor the fear of it, suffice to remove it. Nor are there any sacrifices, or labors, however great, strenuous, or protracted, which will suffice to remove the galling burden of sin. Paul tried it, Luther tried it, ten thousand times ten thousand harassed souls have tried it, tried it by every conceivable means; but all in vain. There is but one cure for sin, the Christ of the cross.

When erring Israel was suffering from the bites of the plague of serpents, there was but one cure. All the science in the universe, all the remedies in the pharmacopoeia of nature, would not have sufficed. God had Moses to put up a sign. And God said to the people, look and ye shall live. If they looked they were healed. If they refused to look they died. So it is with the crucified Jesus. God says, here is my remedy for sin, and all its ills. It will be universally and fully effective. It is ready to be bestowed without money and without price. God says, Come, I am waiting, longing, anxious to bestow the remedy. But it must be this remedy, there is no other. Those who will not be cured in this way must go uncured.

Some find it difficult to believe that there is such a universal, and effective remedy; a remedy so easily to be received. But we take this truth on the same ground on which we accept the fact of sin, on the ground of God's holy Word. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And just as soon as the Spirit of God has broken down the barriers of pride and unbelief, and a humbly penitent heart cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner, just so soon God's pardon is given. Just so soon as the hand of faith goes out to touch the hem of Christ's garment, it matters not how diffident and trembling that hand may be, the heavenly stream of healing efficacy goes forth, the accursed paralyzing burden of sin is removed, the health of the Christ-life is given.

And just here the blessed doctrine of justification comes in. Indeed, this is the doctrine of justification. God's Word everywhere teaches us that just as soon as a man becomes conscious of his sinful condition, deplores it, repents of the evil, and believes that Jesus is the only Saviour from sin, in that moment God accepts him as His child. This is the act of justification. It is not a process which may be drawn out through months, or years. It is an instantaneous act of God. It takes place just as soon as there is in the heart of a man a faith which looks to Christ. And it matters not how feeble and fluttering this faith may be.

Justification is not the infusing of a new nature into man. It is a judicial declaration on God's part concerning man's relationship to Him. But it is more than a mere declaration. It is an act of God which changes man's whole relationship to Him. In this act of God there is a complete removal of all the guilt of man's sin, the perfect righteousness of Christ is given to the pardoned one, and he is received into full sonship and heirship.

It is often difficult for us to accept this precious truth. It hurts our pride. It does not leave us anything of which to boast. Or it seems too good to be true. It seems hard to believe that God would condescend to do so much for such unworthy creatures. And all kinds of doubts the devil tries to instill into our minds. But we take God's Word for it. We will meet every objection with a thus saith the Lord. Because He says it, we "conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

2. What Makes Justification Possible

Let us now give attention to this thought, — the ground of this justifying act of God, or, if you please, that which makes it possible for God to justify poor sinners.

Nowhere in His economy does God act arbitrarily. God does not do things without a reason. Nor can He in His almightiness say that sin is not sin. Even God cannot take away sin without meeting the demands of justice. To do so one side of His being would be stultifying another equal side of His nature. There must be a ground on the basis of which God can still be God, still be just, still be true and loving, and yet forgive and justify men.

Justification, as we have seen, cannot be purchased by any mere human effort. The combined genius, wealth, achievement, or sacrifice of the race would never purchase forgiveness and justification for one soul. Only the God-man could make justification possible. And He could purchase it, not with gold, or silver, though the riches of the universe are His; but only by His perfect obedience to God's holy law, and by His innocent sufferings and death.

The procuring cause of our justification is the grace, the mercy, the goodness, the love of God. Defaced and defiled by sin though the children of men were God loved them still. The father of the prodigal son, as you will remember, is represented as watching, with longing eyes, the way which led to the far country; for the young man there, clothed in rags, blue-eyed from dissipation, dejectedly, hopelessly feeding swine, while his own hunger gnawed insatiably, was still his boy; his lost, wandering boy. That is given as a picture of God's attitude toward the children of men. And this love of God for man set Him to work to find a way for man's reclamation and restoration. This whole story is told in that one inexpressibly precious verse of St. John: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The real ground of justification is found in Jesus Christ and His work in man's behalf. God cannot say that black is white, that sin is not sin. God says, the soul that sinneth shall die. He, then, could not be true and let sin pass by unscourged. God has to be just when He justifies (Rom. 3:26). Just in the antecedents which prepare for justification as well as just in bestowing justification when all the requirements are met. So Divine love conceived the plan of having His Son become man, a God-man, so that He could take man's place. The Son of God did this. As man's substitute He

suffered the penalties of man's transgressions, the righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He also fulfilled God's holy law for man, and wrought out a righteousness which meets the demands of God's holiness.

This is the precious Scripture doctrine which puts a real foundation under man's feet, which gives him the assurance of salvation. If we want to be saved we must go to Christ. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. We are justified, says our text, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Away with self-righteous thoughts, away with torturing fear; let us flee for refuge to Christ, there, and there alone can we find forgiveness, the cleansing, the righteousness which will restore us to the family of the children of God. And there we shall be sure to find it.

3. When Does Justification Happen?

One chief point remains yet to be answered, how do we become possessed of Christ's redemptive work? What is it that marks that all-important point when God performs His act of justification? Faith is the hand which appropriates Jesus' redemptive work, in the moment when a man believes he is justified.

There are a great many possibilities in the world which never become realities. When the Son of God came down from heaven, and paid man's debt for him, He made it possible for every one of the lost sons and daughters of Adam's race to be justified and saved; but all are not justified and saved. The simple reason is that they will not have it so. God has provided the remedy, they will not permit it to be applied.

There is one simple condition which God requires, which the nature of things requires, if we are to be justified; this one thing is faith, faith in the goodness of God, faith in the person and the sufficiency of the work of Jesus Christ. Any one who knows his Bible knows how full it is of this truth that belief, or faith, decides man's acceptance with God, or his rejection. It cannot be otherwise, for by his unbelief man rejects God, and refuses to allow Him to do anything for him.

It is not faith as a work on man's part which causes God to regard him as a fit subject for justification. It is the faith which, recognizing its own sinfulness and helplessness, surrenders itself to God, trusts His promises, espe-

cially as they are centered in the saving work of God's dear Son. And just the moment a poor heavy-laden sinner comes thus to God with his anguished cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, in that instant he is accepted, the saving efficacy of Jesus' blood becomes his, his sins are washed away, he is accepted as a child of God; he is justified.

What a previous, consolatory doctrine is this of justification. Instead of looking to self, with all our weaknesses and vacillations, in thought, desire, and will, we turn to the perfect Saviour. Are we weak, He is strong. Are we imperfect, He is perfect. Instead of contemplating, in despair, our futile efforts to scale the heights, and bring with us fruits acceptable to God, we turn to God's Son, He has scaled the heights for us, and brought to God the perfect treasure. Trusting Him, He gives to us Himself, and all His blood-bought treasures. We are then safe, God is for us, who can be against!

31. Sanctification

Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. — Eph. 4:22—24.

In all of God's great work in the universe the three persons of the holy Trinity cooperate. Yet there are spheres of activity in which the one or the other of these persons takes the leadership. The very form of our Creed indicates this. The work of creation is ascribed specifically to the Father; redemption, to the Son; and the work of applying redemption, to the Holy Spirit.

As you know, the whole Third Article, which we are now considering, treats of sanctification. And rightly so, for every effort the Holy Spirit puts forth in dealing with men has as its aim the bringing of them back to that state of holiness without which no one shall see God. But the various steps in this process may be, and in the holy Scriptures themselves often are, differentiated. As we saw last time, at a certain stage in the holy Spirit's work an act of God take place which is called justification. This has to do, as we recall, with man's relationship to God. The Holy Spirit's work, however, does not end with the bringing about of a new relationship. He continues to work in and with the child of God to the end of his days. The aim of this endeavor is transformation of character. This process we call sanctification. This also is a very important subject, frequently and emphatically dwelt upon in the sacred Word. Let us today consider this the next logical step in man's spiritual development —

Sanctification

We will treat of the beginning of sanctification in man's life, the progress of the work, and its completion.

I. The beginning of sanctification, let us then at this point consider. Sanctification, in a broad, general sense, has begun in a human life when the operation of the Holy Spirit on that life has succeeded in making the

first forward step in breaking down the barriers of opposition to God and divine things. Just as soon as a man has been taught by the Holy Spirit to know and hate sin, to desire a better life and destiny, and lays hold of Christ as the only cure for sin, as the only source of satisfaction for the soul's desires, he is no longer his old self. New life-elements course through his being. Visions, at least dim, glimmering visions, of better things, beckon him on. New aspirations begin to pulsate within. Hope sits enthroned in his heart. For, by faith, he has laid hold of Christ; and it is written, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

For our peace of mind and heart, however, let us remember, and to this end it is helpful oft to repeat it, that just here that blessed act of God takes place which we call justification. This act of God at once takes us out of the kingdom and power of darkness, and translates us into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). This act is made possible by what Jesus has done for us. It consists in bestowing on us a full and free pardon, because Christ has paid the penalty of all our sins. The other half of this act consists in bestowing on us the perfect righteousness of Jesus our Saviour. But because this act of God, judicially and most effectually changing our relationship to Him, can take place in man only with the begetting, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, of an incipient spiritual life, we include this beginning also in the process of sanctification, broadly viewed.

There is a great difference, however, between justification and sanctification. Justification is an instantaneous act of God, the results of which, however, endure forever, unless one proves a traitor to God. Sanctification, on the contrary, is a life-long process. Justification is a declaration of God concerning man's relationship to Him. Sanctification is a movement within man, prompted and furthered by the Holy Spirit, changing his character. Justification is based on what Christ has done for us. Sanctification is what Christ, through the Spirit, does in us. There are no degrees in justification. When a man believes in Christ he is justified, wholly justified. There is no such thing as a partial justification. But there are degrees in sanctification. In some it is but little more than begun. Some have made considerable progress. A few are struggling hard, many are resting on their oars. In the same person the degree of sanctification often fluctuates. In no person on earth is it ever perfected.

Sanctification, in its inception, as in its development, is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Christian sanctification must not be confounded with merely human reformation. Sometimes the drunkard and the rake, as well as other classes of sinners, change their course of life; not from religious considerations, not from love of God. They may do it because of the solicitations of friends or relatives, because they see that such a course is injuring their chances in life, or because they wish to appear respectable before men. Such a change is most praiseworthy, and highly beneficial, to the one making the change, and all associated with him. But as long as this change is the result merely of the man's own resolution, and has in view present, temporal considerations, it is not sanctification. It is a change of habit, not of heart. It is not prompted by a desire to please God, it does not proceed from faith in Christ, it is not begotten by the Holy Spirit. There is no more vital relation between such a reformation and real sanctification than there is between a clean suit of clothes on one's back, and a clean heart in one's breast.

Sanctification, like every other step in man's salvation, is the work of God. The Father has part in it, for it is the God of peace who sanctifieth us (1 Thess. 5:23). Jesus Christ has His full share in the work of making us holy. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25—27). But sanctification is peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit. He it is who teaches us what sin is, who Christ is, and brings Christ to us and enables us to receive Him as the cure for sin, and our power unto holiness of life. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). And the Holy Spirit does His work, ordinarily at least, through the divinely ordained means, — the Word and the sacraments. As is declared in the passage above, He cleanses and sanctifies His Church with the washing of the water by the Word. And Jesus prays the Father, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is Truth" (St. John 17:17).

II. Sanctification, in the stricter, narrower sense of the word, is the term used to express the development into Christ-likeness of the individual who has been begotten into spiritual life by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and

justified by the everlasting God. This growth in holiness is progressive. It continues through life. This process of sanctification let us now consider.

That the Christian is expected to make good his profession in his conduct, that the good tree is to bear good fruit, that as the children of God we are to glorify Him by following His precepts; these are some of the most frequently, and emphatically taught truths of God's holy Word. Some, indeed, make the mistake of considering conduct the all of the Christian life, the basis of acceptance with God. On this ground no one ever can be accepted. Man can be accepted alone for Christ's sake, pardoned and justified because of what He has done for us. But when holiness of life is viewed aright, as the expression of the new life within; when it is the result of the effort to please and glorify God out of love and gratitude for what He has done for us; when it proceeds from the laudable desire to manifest to the world, for their conviction, the new power for righteousness which God has given to his children; then there cannot be too much effort put forth to lead a holy life. With the exception of the teaching of false doctrine, no one thing has done the Church of God so much harm as the outstanding failure of so many of its professed members to live up in conduct to the standard which God's Word requires, and the Holy Spirit makes possible.

Sanctification, on the one side, consists in more and more putting off the old man; the sinful nature. When under the warming, life begetting rays of the Holy Spirit the old fallow ground of man's spiritually dead nature has yielded to the extent of ceasing resistance, and at least feebly accepts Christ, the life of the individual, as to the inclinations and habits of his corporeal nature, is much as it was before. But now begins the process of transformation. And it is a transformation, first of all, by elimination. As in every country, in early days, the land must be reclaimed largely from the forest, the cultivator begins by cutting down the trees; gradually he digs up the stumps and roots, and burns them; he gathers up the stones, and hauls them away; he drains the stagnant pools. Much after this fashion proceeds the course of Christian culture.

The Christian who is in earnest about the cultivation of his life seeks first of all to have the dark places of his mind lighted up by Divine truth. He wants to come to see all things as fully as possible in the pure white light of God's revelation, without any of the refraction, and false perspectives, which unenlightened human reason gives. Sanctification is partly an educational process, an education in Divine things, under the tutorship of the

Holy Spirit. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). “Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col. 3:9, 10).

The education of the intellect is an essential factor in the progress of sanctification, but it is not enough. Not infrequently people recognize, intellectually, that a certain thing ought to be done, or a certain course pursued, but the knowledge is inoperative. There is no dynamic back of the knowledge to put it into practice. We are all in this world still in the flesh. And in so far as our natural attributes and powers have not been subjugated by the Spirit they are out of harmony with God’s plans. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). But it is the province of the Holy Spirit, aided by our renewed spirits, with such powers as have been acquired, to bring, more and more, into subjection our affections, our will, our whole being, to the holy will of God.

It is not enough, however, simply to root out the evil. God can never be satisfied with a life that is simply divested of sin, however complete it may be. From this it must go on to the positive. Virtues must grow in the places of vices uprooted. The chamber of the heart, swept and garnished of prevailing vices, is still a good lodging place for the worst of evils, till it is filled with living, thriving virtues. We must, indeed, see that sin does not reign in our lives; but the best security against this is to see that goodness reigns there, as the Apostle says: “Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13). Our whole life, in thought, affection, word, and deed, is to be brought, increasingly, into harmony with the Divine will. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

This growth in holiness does not come easily to any one. Some seem to have fiercer conflicts than others; perhaps it is only because they have deeper natures, feel more strongly, and possibly fight harder. But for anyone to grow in holiness of life necessitates a conflict. This is the reason that

Christians are called soldiers, and their life a battle. We are all called to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And here is the place of all places where the Christian profession is proved sincere. It is easy to say, I believe; but when one is willing to crucify the flesh, and train in the exacting discipline of Christ's camp, there is reason to believe the profession is sincere.

The real secret of growth in holiness of life is to walk closer to Christ, in fuller fellowship with Him. The Holy Spirit is the active agent, but what He does is to bring Christ to us, to make Him more effective in our lives. Jesus says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; without me ye can do nothing." But drawing our power from Christ we may learn to say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

There is a wonderful, mysterious, but very real union existing between every true believer and Christ. A real indwelling of Christ in the believer. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (St. John 14:23). In His high priestly prayer Jesus prays for the consummation of this union, "I in them, and Thou in me." And St. Paul tells us that our bodies are members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15). St. Peter tells us that we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). And again St. Paul says, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). To human mind this, as to its nature, is an unfathomable doctrine. But it is a blessed reality. And this is the secret of our growth in holiness. It becomes possible only as Christ is formed in us. To lose ourselves in Christ is the surest and quickest way of developing such a life as is well pleasing to God.

III. The Completed Sanctification is a subject demanding brief consideration, and for several reasons.

There are those who maintain that there is, here and now, such a thing as a perfect sanctification. Christ's exhortation: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," seems to furnish some ground for the contention. The explanation of this passage is that it is the ideal after which we are to strive, and which we are ever increasingly to realize. That we never here attain the ideal is clearly taught in God's Word. The words of the prophet are still true:

"There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"

(Eicl. 7:20). And the Apostle declares that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Most peo-

ple are fully conscious, from their own experience, of the truth of such statements of God's Word. And those who have deceived themselves into believing that they are perfect, need only to be observed closely by those of discerning minds, and the folly of their claim will soon be in evidence.

The holiest and best of men have ever recognize their imperfections, their utter lack of perfect sanctification. David to the last lamented his faults. St. Paul, in his old age, when he had worn himself out by renunciations, and labors in God's Kingdom, says: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; . . . but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). These men, and others like them, had made great progress; much more than many others better satisfied with themselves; they had come better to understand sin, and hated it with a truer, deeper hatred; they had come, too, to have a livelier appreciation of God's ideal man; and they were continually making progress toward it; but they knew there were not perfect. And, whether we are conscious of it or not, this latter is true of us all.

There is only one way in which men, while they are still in this world, are perfectly holy, and that is in Christ. "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress, midst flaming world, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head." When we are God's children, when by faith we are clinging to Christ as our Saviour, we are daily, richly, continually forgiven, cleansed of all the guilt of sin. God looks at us as in Christ. And such people will be continually making progress in holiness of life. The silkworm grows to be similar in color to the leaves on which it feeds. The tree-frog takes on the hue of that to which it clings. So the human soul becomes Christlike when Christ is to that soul the bread of life. If we walk with Him, commune with Him, feed on Him, and become satisfied with His likeness, the world will take note that we have been with Jesus.

Finally the absolutely perfect life will come, but only as we step over the borderland into the next world. Death is the purifying fire which purges away the dross. There the perfect image of God will be restored. There Christ tells us we shall be like Him.

"Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,

All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart!
"Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let it be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee!
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise."

Golladay, R. E. (1917). [I Believe in the Holy Ghost]. In *Sermons on the Catechism: The Apostles' Creed* (Vol. II, pp. 316—373). Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

32. Good Works

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. — Eph. 2:10.

It will be helpful briefly to review the successive steps we have thus far taken in our study of the Third Article. The point from which we started was this, the Holy Ghost is one of the persons of the Godhead; of the same essence as the Father and the Son, possessing a distinct personality. His distinctive office in the plan of salvation is to apply and make effective the redemptive work of Christ Jesus. Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, and the sacraments administered, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for men to accept the blessings offered. Where His gracious efforts are not willfully resisted hard hearts are melted, blind eyes are opened, and a new spiritual life implanted. Man experiences a spiritual birth. At the moment this new spiritual life, under the gestating influence of the Holy Spirit, takes form, so

that there is a reaching forth of the soul for the things of heaven, God steps in to perform His act of justification. By this act man's sins are pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is given to him. He is lifted out of his condition of membership in the kingdom of darkness, he is transferred to the kingdom of grace; he is made a joint heir with Christ of all the blessings of the Father's Kingdom. The work of the Holy Spirit which produces a condition which makes possible this change in relationship, marks also the beginning of a process of renewal within man's own life. Jesus Christ, who did the work on the ground of which man is justified, or brought into a new relationship to God, from the very moment of His entrance into a man's life, begins to work for the transformation of that man's character. This process, which gives its distinctive name to the whole Third Article, we call sanctification, or growth in holiness.

There is yet another step in the unfolding life of the child of God. Every Christian has become, in some measure, a good tree, a tree of the Lord's own planting, the recipient of His gracious care. On such a tree fruit must be borne. Every good tree beareth good fruit. The good fruit of the Christian life, which we are going to consider today, we call

Good Works

I. The term good works is widely, and often, loosely used. It behooves us to give the subject a careful study. Let us, then, as our first step, consider what is to be understood by good works.

Sanctification, as we will recall, is a matter of the very life of an individual. It is internal and vital. A sanctified person is one who, in his deepest nature has learned to hate sin, and love righteousness. In his thoughts, will, affections he has turned his back on the loathesome things of darkness, and faces the sunlight of the things of God. God Himself is the warmth and light giving sun of the sanctified persons's soul. Good works are to be distinguished from sanctification in this that they are the fruits of such a life. Just as we distinguish the fruit of a tree from the life of the tree, though it is the result of the existence and operation of that life.

A man wakes and sleeps, hungers and eats, works and rests because he is a living, sentient, intelligent being. The very nature of his being demands expression in these, and other, forms of activity. By the spiritually stimulating, revivifying touch of the Holy Spirit our dormant spiritual faculties have been revived. Divine energies have begun to pulsate through our being. Jesus Christ Himself lives in us. His is the molding, directing force of our

new life. Being alive our life must find expression. And the expression of the life must, of necessity, be of the same nature as the life finding expression. As our new life is itself of God, it must find expression in doing the things God prompts, and in which He finds pleasure. To the expression of this inner, goldly life we give, the Scriptures give, the name — good works.

From the observations just made, it will be readily seen that good works can be done only by a regenerated, sanctified person. Two neighbors of exactly the same general intelligence, and station in life, may do identically the same work, so far as the character of the work itself is concerned; but the one may be a good work in the Scriptural sense, the other not. When Jones does a work which is the natural outgrowth of his faith in Christ, of his love for Him, and desire to glorify Him, it is a good work. When Smith does the same work, just as well executed, but only not to be outdone by Jones, with no higher motive than to be praised by men, or even out of a naturally generous disposition of heart, but with no faith in Christ, no love for Him, no desire to glorify God, it is not a Christian good work. The work done may be good in itself. It may accomplish good. But the doer of it is not good. And the doing of it is not a good work.

We do not undervalue the importance of correct living on the part of even the unregenerate. When a man lines in conformity to the laws of the land, when he keeps his word, pays his debts, lends a helping hand to his needy neighbor, and conforms his conduct generally to correct standards, we may say, speaking from the viewpoint of men, that such a man's deeds are good. They are legally, civilly good. And due credit is accorded all such. Such living is beneficial to the one who practices it, and all around him; but such deeds cannot be called Christian good works. The Christian motive is lacking.

Another important point is the character of the works which deserve to be classed as good? This is a question with respect to which there is no little confusion, with consequent regret and alarm on the part of many earnest Christians. Not a few have the idea that only those works deserve to be called good which stand out signalized by their greatness, or the peculiarly trying circumstances under which they are performed. The one who goes as a foreign missionary, builds a church or orphanage, endows a school, or does some other equally conspicuous work, these things, it is readily seen, may be called good. When they are done out of Christian faith and love they are good works. And may the goodly company of those thus moved to

render valiant service increase. But for the comfort and encouragement of those whose names never get into the papers as the doers of great deeds, whose lives are spent in the ranks of the humble toilers, and whose opportunities come only in the way of rather small things; let all such remember that the good works, the report of which comes up as the savor of sweet incense to the court of heaven, are not only the great things of life, but includes also the very least. It was the poor widow, who gave the least of all the givers in the Temple, who received Christ's special commendation. Her little gift represented more faith, more love, and more sacrifice.

Indeed, the Word of God shows that when a man's life has been truly surrendered to God, then all that he does is a good work. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3:17). "Whether therefore ye eat, drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Whatever is done in this spirit is a good work. The common duties of the house-wife and mother, sometimes misnamed drudgery, receives a new dignity when viewed in this light. Where there is true love, service for those loved is a pleasure. But when to the love of man there is added the love of God, the service rendered is not only for men, but unto God. It is work done in the King's service. This is true of the toil of the father, and all those who labor under similar conditions. The fact that even the little things of life, if the heart is right, are good works is not an excuse for those who could do the greater things, but will not; it is for the comfort and encouragement of those who would do more, but cannot.

Good works are not only the outward acts of the true child of God, down to the very least; but also the inward exercises of the religious life. The pure affections of the heart, the fear and love of God, our trust in Him, the kindly disposition toward one's neighbor; the movement of the will toward that which is right; the spirit of submissiveness, exhibited in humility and patience; these, and other, movements within the inner life itself, are rightly included in the term good works. Many of these things are, of course, known as such only to God.

Are we doing good works? Are our souls in tune with the things which are of God's Spirit? Are we cultivating the virtues of life? Are we, by the blamelessness of our conduct, by the disinterested helpfulness of our service, putting to silence the cavils of the gainsayers, and winning the approval of God, and all those born of the Spirit? This should be the case.

This is what God requires of us. This is what men have a right to expect of us. Our text tells us that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Think of the force of these words, we have received our new life to the end that it should be adorned with good works. Again, the Word tells us that God has provided for our spiritual needs to the end that we may be thoroughly equipped for the doing of good works (2 Tim. 3:17). And once more we are told that our Saviour gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14). And Jesus Himself says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. 5:16). Do not these, and many other similar passages, show very clearly that God requires his children to show forth in their daily lines, the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light?

II. Remembering, as it is essential we should, certain statements of last Sunday, to the effect that there is absolutely no possibility of human perfection in this life, the question may suggest itself to your mind, — how can those, who are in their very nature still imperfect, do works which can pass muster before the searching eye of God as good, as well-pleasing in His sight?

Compared with the ideal of life as set forth in the law of God, when spiritually interpreted, and as exhibited in the lives of the angels and saints made perfect, there is no human life but that has come far short. And none realize this so fully as those who have reached the highest rungs of the ladder of achievement in the life of saintliness. St. Paul, around whose head gathered the halo of achievements, over self and the world, almost superhuman, cried out: "The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). The ascetic James laments, "In many things we offend all" (3:2). And St. Augustine, speaking, not of the years of his youthful folly, but of his later, sedate years, says: "I being not full of Thee, am a burden to myself. Sorrowful joys contend with joyous sorrows; and which will conquer, I know not. Ah me! Lord, have mercy upon me."

No Christian's conduct is so perfect that improvement is impossible. Our flesh and blood as yet have not been wholly brought into subjection to the mind of the Spirit. And as our carnal body is the agent through which the Holy Spirit, and our renewed spirit, works, some of the imperfections of the

agent clings to the results brought forth. It was in view of this condition that the prophet exclaims: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa.

64:6).

In spite of this sad, humbling truth it is possible for Christians to do good works, pleasing to God. It is said of Dorcas that she was full of good works and alms deeds which she did (Acts 9:36). And many others have received the stamp of God's approval. And every child of God does such good works just in proportion as he holds fellowship with Christ, and draws his inspiration and strength from Him.

The works of the child of God are good because they have their genesis in the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God; Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness"

(Ps. 143:10). The works of the Christian are good because his life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), and what he does bears Christ's imprimatur. In other words, our heavenly Father looks on what his children do in the reflected light of Christ's presence, and appropriated merit. Though none of our works are perfect, because there is a new life in us, and this new life loves, and with more or less success, begins to do that which is good, God is pleased. "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things" (St. Matt. 12:35). Any proper parent understands this situation. When children are cheerfully obedient, and desirous of helping father and mother, are they not pleased with their children's efforts? pleased even though they are often slow in learning just how to take hold, and consequently rather awkward in execution? God is pleased with our efforts when, as we say, our hearts are truly in the right place; when there is really a will to do His will, even though, as St. Paul says, we find it next to impossible to do the good that we would.

Not only are good works possible to a Christian, they are necessary. They are necessary not to the securing of salvation, for we are saved by grace, through faith, and not by any works of righteousness we can do. We must forever give up the idea of meriting forgiveness by our works. When we have done our best we are still unprofitable servants (St. Luke

17:10). But it may still be insisted that good works are necessary. The all-sufficient necessity lies in this, God requires good works of us

(St. Matt. 5:16, 44). They are necessary because they are the Divinely ordered sequence of the new life of faith which results in justification. Can

faith save a man? Not if it is a mere intellectual, theoretical, speculative faith; a faith which is a mere sentiment, a kind of spiritual luxury, a moral condition. And the faith which grips men's souls, and binds them into indissoluble fellowship with Christ, not only brings justification, but is the beginning of a progressive sanctification. Every efficient cause, in proper adjustment, is going to have a commensurate effect. The efficient cause of good works is the appropriated, the indwelling Christ. If there is a faith to appropriate Him for justification, there will be the beginning of sanctification and good works. And, conversely, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:17).

The worst enemies of the Church of God, more hurtful than all the infidels who have ever lived, are those members of the Church who prate loud and long about their orthodoxy, but live much like heathen. There is an orthodoxy of life as well as of creed. Jesus said, "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (St. John 5:36). The same principle is applicable to us. Failure to live the orthodox life does not prove the inefficiency of the creed, but it does prove that it has taken no hold, or very little hold, on our lives. But let a Christian show that the love of Christ is the all-compelling power of his life; let this be shown in holiness of living, in patience under trials, in loving service willingly rendered, in willingness to sacrifice for every good, needy cause; and he gives a testimony to the efficacy of the indwelling Christ too strong to be successfully opposed, too holy to be rudely defied.

III. Let us now devote a moment to considering the rewards of good works. We have indirectly touched on this subject, but there are a few points worthy of further treatment.

Again and again do we emphasize the Scripture truth that all that we have, or can hope for, in the way of spiritual blessings are gifts of God's grace. And yet more widely spread than many think, even on the part of evangelical Christians, is the idea that by what they do, by the evil from which they refrain, by the little good they do, they shall obtain eternal blessedness. How often do we hear, as we minister by sick beds, and from others, of whom we ask their hopes of salvation, and the ground on which it is based, — oh, I have always tried to be honest; I have never injured any one, at least no one but myself; I have given a helping hand wherever I could. On such flimsy foundation do many build. Evidently such people

have never learned the real nature and extent of sin as taught in God's Word, and revealed in human experience. Nor do they know the condemnation and punishment which is its due. Nor have they learned from the same Word the high demands God makes of those who stand approved before Him. If they knew these things they would never hope to stand there clothed only in the ragged and bedraggled garments of their own righteousness. Of ourselves we deserve nothing from God but His wrath and displeasure. The righteousness of Christ is the only garment which enables us to stand approved of God. But in the richness of His goodness God does reward the doer of good deeds. They are rewards of grace.

There are rewards which God gives for every service, however small they may be. Jesus tells us that he who gives but a cup of water in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward (St. Matt. 10:42). The one who helps any real need, who lovingly helps some tottering wayfarer over the rough places of life's highway, who helps a puzzled child to unravel some of the knotty problems of life, who dries the tear driven to the eye by a bleeding heart; no such deed, prompted by pure motives, will ever go unrewarded. The action itself has reflexively put something into the doer's life which can never be lost.

Good deeds are largely their own reward. There are compensations in being good, and doing good. How comforting, how strengthening, is the approval of a good conscience, a truly enlightened good conscience. How splendid the feeling of the man who knows that God, and godly men, approve his conduct. He may be poor in this world's goods. The piercing winds may bite through thin garments; the pinch of hunger may often follow the meager repast; but when he knows that God smiles approvingly his soul is clothed in more than purple and fine linen, and feeds on ambrosial viands.

There are honors and distinctions appropriately given to those who distinguish themselves in the service of their fellowmen, in both church and state, and this by Divine command. And those whose distinction comes from service in spiritual things, turning many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. (Dan. 12:3). But after all, the highest honor and reward is in the possession of a pure, good character.

"Howe'er it be; it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,

And simple faith than Norman blood."

Let us be deeply in love with goodness, that which is inherent, a part of the life, and that which expresses itself in word and deed. But on account of this there can never be any self-glorification. All that is good is from God, the absolute good. And only as the old self is surrendered to Christ, and replaced by the Christ formed in us, does our life begin to unfold in beauty of being and action. Scan the pages of sacred history as we may, we will find that those who bring forth richly of good works to the glory of God are only those to whom Christ has become all and in all.

33. The Holy Christian Church

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. — St. Matt. 16:16—18.

Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Eph. 5:25—27.

THE THIRD ARTICLE treats of four leading subjects. The person of the Holy Ghost; His work of gathering a people of God; the Church, which is the result of His gathering, enlightening, sanctifying process; and the eternal life into which God's children pass through death and resurrection. The first and second of these subdivisions having been considered, we now pass on to the third, — the Holy Spirit's workmanship, the Christian Church.

The Christian Church! What a subject! what a history! what a task! what a future! is presented for consideration in this Word. All the great souls in the Kingdom of God have even been absorbed in reverent contemplation of this glorious institution. They have been thrilled to the very depth of their being by the vision of the Church's mission, former extent, and final goal. They were inspired by its claims to put forth the greatest exertions, to make

the supreme sacrifices. David and Isaiah were lifted into transports of holy joy when they were given prophetic visions of that nobler, still loftier Kingdom, of which the one in which they were privileged to live and labor was but the type and shadow. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of these, O city of God." "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely." The Kingdom of God, the Christian Church, was the keynote of Jesus' message. For the establishment of this Kingdom He came into the world, for it He labored, for it He gave His life. He beheld it as an impregnable fortress against which all the assaults of the powers of darkness should wear themselves out in vain. St. Paul is entranced by his contemplation of this people of God, this marvelous creation of the Lord; and develops, with ever increasing evidences of rapture, his various representations of the Church. He pictures it as the body, and again as the bride, of Christ. At another time he sees it as the most wonderful building the earth has ever borne, the foundation laid by God Himself, the structure ever rising heavenward, attaining ever greater height, breadth, and beauty. Luther also caught the Pauline vision. To him the Church was an object of deep, burning, joyous affection. To the Church he fled for comfort in hours of danger and distress; for it he lived and wrought, for it he, too, was willing to die.

Few have been the times when there was more need of calm, serious study of the church, its nature, mission, and equipment, than there is now. But if it is to be really profitable, this study must be made in the light of God's own revelations on the subject. To many the word church is but little more than a name. By others it is fiercely arraigned. The Church is said to have lost its grip, to stand for little that is worth while, and to be doing even less. As a matter of confession we still repeat the words, "I believe in the holy Christian Church." But what content do these words consciously present to us? What hold have these words on our life? What emotions do they enkindle in our souls? What hopes are based on them? To what deeds do they inspire us? For our morning study let us make a new examination of these words of our creed, — I believe in the holy Christian Church.

1. Established And Preserved By God

We believe in the Christian Church as an institution established and preserved by God.

The family and the state were also divinely established. God decreed their existence, and gave laws for their regulation. He blesses with many temporal blessings those who obey them, and judges and punishes those who disobey. But in a sense beyond that which can be affirmed of the family or the state, the Church is a divine institution. It stands by the side of, it towers above, family and state, as a guiding, molding, governing institution. The highest, the only really enduring functions of family and state are what they, directly or indirectly, contribute to the Kingdom of God. As institutions the family and the state shall pass away. The Kingdom of God endures forever. The family and the state serve the purposes of the present life, the Church contributes the elements of blessedness to this life, and fits men for eternal blessedness.

If we study the Church carefully we find that in all its relations it came forth from God. The love of God for sinful man was the root source out of which the Church grew. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." In these words we trace the origin of the Church of God to its fountain head. The foundation of the Church, in fact, was laid by Jesus Christ, when He came, putting Himself, the holy One of God, who knew no sin, in the sinner's place, bore away the sinner's burden, and prepared for Him a perfect righteousness. And, as we have seen in a former address, all this can become our own only by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Each of the three persons of the Holy Trinity has been, and is still, active in the establishment of the Church of God.

We see, then, that God has done such work for the establishment of the Christian Church as He never did for any other institution. The family and state are perpetuated largely by the operation of the so-called laws of nature, though by no means independently of God's presence and operation. In the Church, as to its original establishment, and its continued propagation, God is present, and operates, as in no other sphere. He works in the Church through means, the Word and the sacraments in which are recognizable, to men, no natural laws, or forces, capable of producing the results everywhere discernible. The Church of God is a perpetual miracle.

Truly, no one who implicitly follows the teaching of God's Word can doubt that the Church is God's own direct workmanship. "We are God's husbandry, we are God's building." And Jesus is the great Master-Builder.

To St. Peter He says, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." And He builds His Church as a corporate part of Himself. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."

The continued growth, the preservation, of the Church is just as truly God's work. The history of the Church alone, the superhuman trials it has endured, the triumphs it has won, should be the sufficient proof of this. But the Lord tells us in plain words, that we may be confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day (1 Pet. 1:5).

But what in reality is this Church of which there is so much spoken? To some the word church calls up only visions of a building erected by men's hands for the accommodation of a local company of those who entertain the same ideals of truth and life. To others the word church, in connection with a qualifier, is the designation which distinguishes a certain body of Christians from others who entertain somewhat different views of truth, are governed by a different ecclesiastical system, or worship God by the use of a different ritual; such, for instance, as the Lutheran, the Episcopal, or the Presbyterian Church. But the word church as used in our text, and most other places in the Scriptures, and in our Creed, has a higher, wider, richer meaning than these we have mentioned. The Christian Church is that great, all-inclusive body of God's children, of all times and places, which is united with Christ by a living faith. It matters not of what religious organization, whether a churchman or dissenter, if one is truly a believer in Christ he is a member of His Church. And no human bans or proscriptions can exclude from the Church the one who, by faith, is united to Christ. And, on the other hand, no rites or proclamations of men can make one a real member of the Church who is not so united to Christ.

This explains why we speak of the Church as essentially invisible. Only in a very wide sense is it permissible to speak of it as visible. Every decade a religious census is taken of our land. When the results are tabulated they can tell how many of our people are, by profession, members of the various denominations; the value of all Church property; and many other things concerning the government and activities of the Church. But on this basis, no man can decide how many of the professors are actually members of God's Kingdom. There are tares among the grain, there is chaff mixed with

the wheat; and God alone knows, with certainty, which is which. We should be constantly so living that men, judging by our conduct, will be forced to conclude that we are Christians; but let us not forget that that which decides is what God sees and says. And this is the reason we say, I believe in the Church. In its deepest reality it is not a matter of sight, but of faith. We are sure there is a Church simply because Jesus said He was going to build it, and that all the powers of darkness could not tear it down.

When we grasp the all-important truth that it is living relationship with Christ Jesus, and this alone, that decides church membership, the presumptuousness and falsity of the claims of Rome that theirs is the only saving church becomes apparent. In the first place, there is no such thing as a saving church. It is Christ, and He alone, who saves. And no church has a monopoly of the merits of Christ. As soon as a person has been brought into living relation with Christ he is in the Church, whether he has ever formally united with some branch of the visible church or not; though ordinarily he will do this. Because of the fact that no man can be saved apart from Christ, and that every believer in Him is in virtue thereof a member of His Church, we subscribe to the statement, for it is thoroughly biblical, that outside of the Church of Christ there is no salvation. But no denomination has the right to say, ours is the Church of Christ, outside of it there is no salvation.

2. Unity and Perpetuity

We believe in the unity and perpetuity of the Christian Church.

The Church of God is essentially one in all times, and in all places. God's Word does, at times, speak of local organizations as churches. The understanding, of course, being that they are integral parts of the one large, all-comprehensive body of believers. But in all of the great definitive passages of Scripture the Church is always spoken of as one. Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." Not my churches, but my Church. To the Ephesians St. Paul says, "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. Christ died for but one Church. On this foundation the Apostles built but one Church.

The Church on earth and in heaven is one. Of the divisions of a large army, in long drawn out battle line, one division may dash into the conflict, overwhelm the enemy, and be waving the flag of victory, while another di-

vision, deployed over a longer route and rougher ground, may be but swinging into battle array. But they both belong to the same army. They have the same commander-in-chief. And the victory of one part is the victory of all. Much like this is it with the soldiers of the cross. Ours is not a seven year, nor yet a thirty year conflict. It is perpetual while time lasts. One generation succeeds another, but it is the same conflict. The part above, sooner on the battle-ground, have won their victory; they are perfected, triumphant, glorified. The part below is still militant, war-worn, and oft tear-stained. But we are part of the same army still. We have the same Leader, and fight for the same cause. And every one who follows the great Captain of God's host shall, bye and bye, stand with the laurel crowned host above. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

The Church of the old dispensation and that of the new is essentially one. There are differences, some distinctions it would be unwise to overlook, — but in the great fundamentals they are two phases of one Church. The Church of the Old Testament was made possible only by Jesus Christ, His person and His work. Those people were given the prophetic vision, and laid hold of Jesus by a forward-looking faith. What those people were privileged to see prophetically we see in the light of history, and appropriate by a faith which looks back to promises fulfilled.

The Kingdom of God, as to its earthly manifestation, took on its final form with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Then is when the application of the completed work of Christ began with earnestness and power. It was of this time in particular that Jesus spoke when He said, "I will build my Church.

We are living in a privileged period, but let us not forget our essential unity with the people of God in all ages and climes, in this world and the next.

The Christian Church of today, in spite of its divided state, and oft time partisan spirit, and antagonism, is essentially one. Behind the strongly marked denominational barriers there is an invisible bond of unity. The faith in Christ, and love for Him, which binds men to Christ binds them also to one another. This thought ought to be very effective in banishing the ugly spirit which is often exhibited by the different branches of the Church toward others. Jesus made the unity of his people a subject of earnest prayer. We ought, with all earnestness, to pray and work to the same end. These thoughts about the unity of the Church, the fact that God wants it, and bids

us work for it, should especially inspire the different branches of our own beloved Church to work toward this blessed end. And especially in view of the splendid anniversary we are this year observing.

In speaking as we have of the possibility of being saved in any church where Christ is known, confessed, and served, and only such are Christian churches; and in advocating the desirability of a better understanding of each other by the various churches, and a closer cooperation in the work of God's Kingdom, we are far from teaching that it is a matter of indifference as to which branch of the church one belongs. These branches have had their origin in different conceptions of God's revelation of Himself and His plans. In the church, as elsewhere, we should be truth seekers. In the most important relation of life we should not proceed blindly, or on man's say-so. Where we find the truth, or the largest measure of truth, there we should abide. God's truth for our salvation is fully and finally revealed in His Word. We have this Word in its fulness. Here let us abide by it with loyal devotion.

3. Conquest

Assured that the Christian Church was Divinely instituted, and is Divinely protected, we believe that it is qualified and equipped to make conquest of the earth.

The Church of God has won many great victories. To deny this is to betray one's ignorance or prejudice. These victories have been won in every sphere of human life. In the great fields of education, government, and social betterment the leaven, the impetus, which leads to amelioration and abatement of abuses, and the inauguration of improvements has always come from those who caught their visions in the Kingdom of God.

The churches great victories are won, first of all, in the lives of individuals. No victories in the world and of the world, however great in extent, or rich in benefit to the present lives of men, is to be compared to that which the Holy Spirit wins when one soul is brought from darkness to light, from death to life. All else passes away, this abides. And each person thus won is obligated to show in his life the victory God has won in him; show this by the change in his conception of things, and in his mode of life. And each person thus won is obligated to put his life in the conflict for winning other

victories for the Church of God. The standing orders of the great Head of the Church, given to the Church as a whole, and to each member of it, is to move forward to ever new conquests of this kind.

The means with which God has equipped His Church for winning these victories is the same that was given to the prophets and Apostles, the Word of God and His divinely instituted sacraments. In the sphere of carnal warfare great improvements have been made in the weapons of offense and defense. Here no improvements have been made. None can be made, they are perfect, God-given. One of the great weaknesses of the Church in her work has been that too often she has tried to improve the equipment God gave her. Too frequently the idea has prevailed that culture and a certain refinement of manner is the only aim of the Church. What God wants, that which alone admits a man to the Kingdom of God, to membership in His, the true, Church, is conversion, a change of heart and life. The Holy Spirit alone can bring this about. And God's Word, including the sacramental forms, is the only means for accomplishing this. This alone is the sharp two-edged sword which can reach the spirit of man. This is the only instrument which is the power of God unto salvation.

The Church has not yet won her final victories; but she is winning victories, she is going to keep on winning them. We have little patience with those, often professedly in the Church, who are whining about the churches' inefficiency. The only failures are in the things substituted for the Church, and in the things substituted for God's means of doing His work. Let us guide our course by the star and the compass. Let us preach the Word, let us convince men of sin, assure them of the grace of God, bring to them the redemption in Christ Jesus; let us fit men for citizenship in heaven. And, with the right kind of guidance, there will be produced the best of citizens for the duties of earth.

There is no promise that the Church is going to win all the world for Christ. To the very end there is going to be decided opposition. But in spite of the cataclysmal outbreaks of devilish violence, the Church is winning victories. Even now she is a glorious Church. She is the bride, the very body of Christ. And soon she will triumph. All opposition will be swept aside. As to her individual members, and, of course, collectively, she will be without spot or wrinkle. Haste, O Thou great Head of the Church, the day of our triumph.

32. The Communion Of Saints

Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. — Eph. 5:25—27.

A FEW MOMENTS AGO we again repeated the words, “I believe in ... the communion of saints.” These words are not quite as old as the preceding statement concerning the Church. They were probably first used in a creed, or statement of faith, drawn up by Eusebius Gallus about the middle of the sixth century. A hundred years later the clause is found in the communion service of the Gallican Church. And by the middle of the next century it was generally current in the Apostles’ Creed. Even thus, this confession concerning “the communion of saints” has been in use by the Church general for almost twelve hundred years. "The communion of saints.

What do we understand by this expression? Who are the saints? What are the saints? What is meant by a communion of saints? Does this clause add a new thought to that contained in the words concerning the Church? or is it the same thought clothed in somewhat different words? We ought not to stultify ourselves by constantly repeating words concerning the meaning of which we have no definite ideas.

The Apostle’s Creed is a creed of Christendom. There is, however, a difference of interpretation as to this clause concerning the saints. Rome holds the words, “the communion of saints,” to express a thought which goes beyond that contained in the statement, “I believe in ... the holy Christian Church.” By the “saints” she understands those who have specially signaled themselves in the exercises of a godly life, and in the service of God and his people. The saints are the exceptionally shining lights, those who have acquired treasures of merit which becomes the heritage of the Church, to be dispensed, for a suitable compensation, to those who have been less holy and laborious. The saints are those to whom the less renowned may go in intercession, for they have the power of helping.

Protestant churches generally understand the clause, “the communion of saints,” to be an explanation of the character of the Church. It tells us that the Church is that body of people who are living in vital relationship to Jesus Christ, who are washed in His blood, and have begun to live in newness of life. As we have made a study of the church in its general aspect, let us today continue this study, confining ourselves more closely to this interpretative clause, — the Church as the communion of saints.

1. How It Is A Communion of Saints

For our own encouragement, as well as to be able to stop the mouths of the gainsayers, we should keep clearly in mind in what sense it is that we may correctly speak of the Church as a communion of saints. To this point let us first give our attention.

The communion of saints! There is a charm in the word saints which grips the souls of men. Even the greatest sinners admire saintliness. But are the real saints not all dead? Are their names not found only in the columns of church calendars? When we scan the pages of recent history, when we take a survey of actual conditions in the church-life of any community, as it is today, does it not seem to be a misnomer to speak of any community or class of men as saints?

The Romish has largely become the popular conception of saintliness. When we speak of a saint most people think of one living a sequestered, mystical, austere life. Those who have stood on the mountain tops; those who are pale and thin from fasting, and worn from midnight vigils; those who have worn themselves out with self-forgetful, unceasing service; who have dared the fagot and the plague; who have kept in subjection rebellious desire, and have whipped into ceaseless action for a good cause lethargic laggard members; those who have crucified their pride and love of place and power, and lived the surrendered life of humble, unrequited, and often unappreciated, service. This is the popular conception of saintliness. And there is a large element of truth in it. If those who lived this life were children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, if they lived thus out of love for Him, and not to win heaven thereby, they may be called saints by way of preeminence. Something of this ought to be more common than it is. There ought to be more heroism in our Christianity. We are too conventional, too harm-

less, in our adherence to Christ. We are too often living a devitalized Christianity. We are trying to make up by multiplied and intricate organization what we lack of the fire of enthusiasm which comes from the richly indwelling Spirit.

In our iconoclastic, democratic Church we have not committed the folly of worshipping the saints. And there is no danger of it. But we present for consideration the question, have we not gone too far in the other direction? Is there among us that love for the greatly good which there ought to be? that admiration for achievement in saintliness which should characterize a people of God? In the calendar of the Church-year, for some parts of our Church, we find a few Apostle's days, Reformation day and the like; but is there as much love among us as there was among our parents, and grandparents, for such effusions of the saints as Gerhard's Sacred Meditations, Stark's Handbook, and such other guides to holy, courageous living? Is there among us such a passion as there ought to be for the characters of the outstanding men and women with the rarest and most radiant form of genius, a genius for purity, for goodness? These are the ones who put the crown of dignity on human life, and cost a halo around the activities of men, as the sudden burst of sunlight, through a rift in the clouds, transforms the appearance of the earth.

There ought to be more striving for a higher degree of saintliness in the sense in which we have been speaking. But the meaning of the word saint, as it is used in the Creed, and, ordinarily, in the Scriptures, is not expressive of the life of the few with an apparent genius for the things which excel in the way of holy living. All the believers in Christ, all the lovers of God, are called saints.

The Christian Church, of which all the children of God are members, is an institution the great aim of which is to promote holiness of life. The world lieth in wickedness. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The purpose of the Church is to reclaim men. It sets up a new ideal of life. By holy baptism a new life is begotten, and by its continued efficacy this life is nurtured. Each true Christian is a member of the body of which Christ is the head, and each member partakes somewhat of the nature of the Head; the degree of likeness depending on the strength and perfect functioning of the articulation.

Let us not forget, however, that sainthood begins with, and goes along hand in hand with forgiveness. No one becomes a Christian but by forgive-

ness. And every forgiven person is a Christian, and every Christian is a saint. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Yes, Christ the Lord is our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification, (1 Cor. 1:30). In Christ we have a righteousness, a gift righteousness, with which God Himself can find no fault, because in it there is no flaw. And now, being in Christ, and Christ in us, we begin to love righteousness, and by the Holy Spirit's aid begin to develop a righteousness which may be called our own.

True, we do not find, even among Christians, any moral perfection. We find only men and women who are imperfect, who oft make mistakes, who are at times guilty of being caught napping by the tempter. At these instances of failure the mockers point the finger of scorn. But the true child of God, though he regrets his own, and his brother's failures, is not dismayed. He knows that which really makes him a saint is not his own, but Christ's righteousness. He is spiritually clean because living a life of repentance, the constant application of Christ's blood makes him whiter than snow.

The world spitefully, mockingly, keeps reminding us of our failures. But they have not a hundredth part of the conception of them that we ourselves have. They lack the vision we have. Their standards of judgment are all human. We have learned to measure things by Divine standards. But this is itself part of our sainthood. To know and hate sin, to feel its galling yoke, and long for deliverance, is a decisive step in the path to better things. To have a real heart longing for the Christ-like life of which the Spirit has given us visions is the pledge of coming gratification.

After all has been said in derision of the church which spite and hatred could devise, after all the concessions have been made which candor demands, the indisputable fact remains that in every relation of life the Church of God has been the saving salt of the earth. Christianity has redeemed society. It has done much to ease men of their burdens. It has given courage and strength for life's battles. It has thrown the radiant light of certainty along the pathway of the untrodden future. Yes, in a very real sense, the people of God are saints. The Church is a glorious institution. The spots have not all been as yet eradicated, or the wrinkles smoothed out; but enough has been achieved to be a splendid prophecy of the glory that is to be.

“I believe in ... the communion of saints.” O glorious, blood bought, blood washed, throng. Illustrious company of the twice born, what visions and aspirations are thine. What achievements hast thou recorded. Even in thy imperfection, thou art still the salt of the earth, the flower of humanity. As thou dost struggle onward and upward through chilling frosts and parching sands, but constantly showing something of the fragrant blossoms and beauteous flowers of Christlike virtues, thou art bringing down to this vale of tears some of the glimpses and foretastes of heaven.

And may we all realize that saintliness, in the sense of notable achievement in Christlike life and service, is not only for the few. Through the operation of the Spirit of holiness, and the rich indwelling of Him who is Lord and King of the saints, much more might be attained by most of us than is usually attained; there are not two Christianities, a common, unresponsive, non-achieving kind for the crowd; a living, throbbing, impelling, achieving kind for the elect few. The few excel only because they more completely surrender themselves to be controlled by Him whose rich indwelling can result only in a victorious life. We are all called to this richer life of sainthood, but only the few follow and obey, and reach a distinguishing measure of fruitage.

Thank God, there are saints of this sort today, as there have ever been of old. Yes, saints of the heroic mold. Saints in the pulpit, and the pew; saints humbly suppliant hard by the Altar, saints busy in centers of human activity. Men there are of means who would scorn to make a dirty dollar, whose highest aim it is to glorify God, and build up His Kingdom; men there are who could have shone in academic or legislative halls or achieved in the marts of trade; but are satisfied, satisfied, did we say? no, not satisfied merely, but rejoicing, considering it the highest of privileges, to minister in the things of the Kingdom of God. These are of the shining saints. And in the ranks of the most humble, among those whose names never appear in the papers, there are saints as dear to the heart of God as any whose names have ever graced the pages of history. Sometimes they are simply patient, uncomplaining sufferers, whose presence radiates a benison. Again they are self-forgetful toilers, living for God, and those they love. Sometimes they are humble folk, of meager attainments; but of such unshaken faith, glowing love, and irreproachable life, that it must be recognized of all that they are living and walking with God.

2. Glorious Fellowship

There is a company of those rightly called saints. But this is not all that is worth considering. It was not by accident, but design, that the Creed, on the basis of many Scripture passages, speaks of a communion of saints. It is well worth our attention to dwell for a moment on this glorious fellowship of the saints.

When lonely Adam walked the earth, a perfect man in a perfect state, God looked on him with a certain degree of compassion, and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." This is true in every possible sense. No human being is complete in himself. He must needs be complemented in order to achieve his ends, and be satisfied. Absolutely as man depends on God for his existence and happiness, it is questionable, reasoning from the above incident in Paradise, whether an isolated person could be perfectly happy even in glory. Man needs, by the very constitution of his being, the fellowship of his kind to bring him complete happiness.

There are selfish, greedy, grasping people in the world who want everything for themselves. They act, as the prophet says, as if they would like to possess everything, so as to be placed alone in the midst of the earth. Could they succeed in cornering the earth they would not be happy. Material gain can never fully and finally satisfy a human soul. It takes the beating of human heart in unison with human heart; it takes the sense of common interests, common aims, a common destiny, the consciousness of fellow-feeling, to give the human soul somewhat of satisfaction, a sense of completeness. And it is only when this fellowship is in spiritual things that man's happiness attains the highest of which human life is capable. And all other human relations and associations are but shadows, types and prophecies of that fellowship which is to be found in the Kingdom of God, the communion of saints.

God established His Church that men might attain their highest happiness, true blessedness; and that He might show forth, in His fostering government of it, the brightest rays of His glory. The keynote word of the Church of God is love, love Divine and human love Divinely begotten and fostered. The Church of God is the loveliest creation of God's love. Here He gives highest expression to His glory — His love. The language of love is fellowship. When words fail there is still the meaningful glance, the vi-

brant clasp of love-touched hands, the response of speaking soul to speaking soul. Here God comes to make Himself felt to our souls; to minister to our necessities, to take us up in His strong embrace, to soothe our sorrows, to make us strong, hopeful, joyous. Here heavenward looking souls find the fellowship of kindred spirits; they rejoice in each other's successes, they help bear each other's burdens, they help to inspire each other to nobler resolve and more faithful effort. Conscious of our fellowship with God, and our fellowship with all God's children on earth and in heaven, and thrilled by its joy and strength, this ministry is carried to those who do not yet know the blessings of this fellowship. "The communion of saints.

There is a communion of saints as a result of the fact that all have been begotten by the operation of the same Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God and the Sacraments. They are held together by the same objective bond of unity, the truth of God's Word; and by the same subjective bond of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is communion, fellowship, in the purpose, the aim, of all God's children; to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever, to grow more and more like Him as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. We are all fighting the same good fight of faith, opposing the same enemies, supporting the same good causes, standing for the same great fundamental principles, building up the same Kingdom, looking forward with the same hopes.

Who that really delights in the worship of God has not been cheered by the consciousness of the communion of all God's people in this holy service? There are some differences, we have not yet come to see eye to eye. There has often been too much of the unregenerated human element which has introduced discord; but back of it all the eye of faith sees the indis severable unity. All approach the same throne, though the same Mediator. All come seeking what are fundamentally, the same gifts, — forgivenesses, edification, strength for life's duties, a closer walk with God. At the same time there is a fellowship with all the remainder of God's people. Who has not felt something of the inspiration which comes from participation in the workshop of an assembly of God's people, and the consciousness that this is but a very little part of that mighty host that regularly draws near the throne of the Majesty on high? And even when alone, it may be reclining on a bed of sickness, or among strangers in a distant land, we take up the old Book, read its lessons, and offer our prayers, we are often lifted beyond ourselves, in spirit being drawn into the very audience chamber of the Most High; we

are made conscious of our oneness with all those who, with similar faith, and soul-hunger, worship the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the beauty of holiness.

This fellowship of the saints is not confined, so far as it is a service of praise and thanksgiving, to the goodly company of the saints on earth. In all godly exercises, save those which have to do directly with the infirmities of our earthly state, such as repentance, remission, and the like, which the perfect no longer need, there is one glorious fellowship of the saints, both those on earth and in heaven.

No one who has ever caught even the shadow of what “the communion of saints” means can ever be unresponsive to its high appeal. The fellowship of the saints should permeate, and, on the part of the truly developed saints, does permeate, and dominate, all other fellowships. All other fellowships save that of the saints shall cease. The family, as such, as to its present relations and purposes, shall cease. The state, as we now know it, shall be no more. The communion of saints, with God and each other, survives them all; it goes on forever.

Indeed, these words about the communion of saints are not idle words, not mere speculations. It is a glorious, encouraging, inspiring fact. May we be able to enter more, and still more, into the spirit of it. The Church will then become increasingly dear to us. It will enlist more of our sympathies, engage more of our energies, inspire us to greater love, lead us to greater sacrifices, bring to us greater joys. Oh, Mother Church! thou art worth a thousand times as much of all this as we are capable of giving.

“The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make;
Joined to the Lord, in bonds of love,
All of His grace partake.”

33. The Forgiveness Of Sins

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest work iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. — Ps. 130:1—4.

WE ARE GRADUALLY DRAWING NEAR the close of our studies on the Creed. Indeed today we have come to the last subject of the Third Article which has to do with life as we now know it. What great, cardinal truths these are of which the Creed treats. They stand out like the giant patriarchs in some primeval forest. Not to go any farther back than the Third Article, we have the person and work of the Holy Spirit; the founding of the Christian Church; and the character and activities of its members. But now we close this earthly order with a statement about forgiveness of sins. Does this not seem to be an anticlimax? Is it not a weak ending to a great series of thoughts? Not so. All that God has revealed of Himself in the Gospel, of which the Creed is the summary; the establishment of the church; the administration of the means of grace, all have but one aim, — to lead us to believe in His ability and willingness to forgive the sins of the children of men.

Let us take up for earnest, prayerful study in this morning's hour the words of this statement of our Creed — I believe the forgiveness of sins.

1. Sin

The first point which needs to be candidly, fearlessly considered is the sin for which we need forgiveness. We will never get anywhere with the thought of forgiveness till we have an adequate consciousness of the nature and consequences of sin.

There are many who are troubled very little about forgiveness, because they have never had driven home to them the enfeebling, blinding, corroding

ing, cancerous, damning, body and soul destroying nature of sin. In the past twenty-five years we have lost very much in appreciation of the real seriousness of sin. It is said that the Greeks and Romans, with all their culture had no true conception of sin. Very much of the culture of our age is being employed to destroy the consciousness of sin. Science and philosophy have combined to give it a naturalistic explanation. To them sin is nothing but some of the imperfections still clinging to us as we have advanced along the path of development. To others sin is nothing but the series of circumstances which necessitates the struggle to overcome. Very many consider sin as something to be reckoned with, indeed; but nothing series, — something like a blotch on the skin, a pimple, or a boil, inconvenient, and unsightly, it may be; but not series.

Sin, s-i-n, a very small word; but oh, what a meaning. Sin, oh the darkness and the stench of it. You have read of volcanoes in violent eruption, the dark clouds rolling out and eclipsing the sun, and hiding the beauties of the landscape; rivers of lava flowing down the valleys, destroying golden harvests, and teeming villages; the stifling, sulphuric fumes blighting what the swifter elements had spared, and spreading the general desolation. Somewhat like this is sin. It has its original source in the Stygian depths where the prince of darkness has his reeking Ebon throne. The clouds of dust and smoke this fire of hell has set afloat have wrapped this whole world in a sickly haze of unreality. The pestilential vapors of this miasm of sin have covered the earth, and made it a charnel-house of bleaching bones. Like some of the fabled monsters of primeval times, with their poisonous fangs dripping with the blood of their innumerable victims, and, with insatiable paunch, dragging their slimy bodies over the length and breadth of the earth, devouring the sons and daughters of men; sin, as a hydra headed, insatiable monster, largely dominates the earth. From its nostrils of fire are breathed forth death and destruction. Wherever cries of woe are heard, wherever human hearts bleed, wherever human tears fall, wherever human forms grow pale and totter and fall by the way, there sin has done its deadly work. There is scarce a garden plat on the face of the earth that sin has not made into a grave. There is not a hamlet or a secluded vale on this terrestrial globe from which sin has not wrung cries that have ascended to the court of the Majesty on high. Sin has been the subject of some of the deepest deliberations in the council chambers of heaven, and has led to some of the most decisive actions ever inaugurated on earth by the holy Trinity. And

the last great act in the drama of earthly human history will have to do with the final settlement of the problem of sin.

In spite of all this, the modern world has largely lost the consciousness of sin. Crime is a violation of human laws, and is punishable by human courts. Of this the dullest wits take some notice. But sin is offense against holy, eternal God. Policemen are not always capable of discerning it. It is not always in contravention of human statutes. Hence many are but little concerned about it.

According to a good many people, there are very few things in our modern life which deserve the opprobrious name — sin. Sin is diluted. It is given high-flown names, so that the villain, especially if well-to-do, is saved his respectability. Sin is no longer a moral problem, the name of a spiritual condition and its expression in action. In the modern view, sin is the result of physical relations. Sin is now, supposedly, gotten rid of by amputation at the hands of the surgeon, — or it is corrected by trepanning the skull, or perforating the cerebellum.

This modern attitude of lightness toward sin which characterizes so much of our modern life is not in accord with some of the very best thought of even the non-Christian world. The deepest, sanest thinkers of every age, and every clime, have busied themselves with this thing we call sin. They have ever recognized it as the fruitful source of all human ills, the one great curse which needs to be cured. And some of them at least did not think it wise to remain in ignorance concerning it. Epicurus, though without the Christian understanding of the nature of sin, declared that the beginning of salvation was in the knowledge of sin. And Seneca praised the thought. If men today knew more about the nature and consequences of sin they would be more in earnest about salvation.

Sin! how shall we ever define it? Men have catalogued sins, they have made all kinds of distinctions, but it is questionable whether thereby they have attained a clearer understanding of sin itself. Sin in its essential nature is singular, not plural. It is the utter corruption and demoralization of our whole human nature. Sin is separation from God the author of life, in true unity with Whom alone human life can be lived in peace and harmony here below, and attain an ultimate destiny of blessedness and glory above. Sin is rebellion of the creature against the creator, and against His laws, which are but the expression of the inner harmony of his own nature, and the purpose

of which is to lead us to live in harmony with Himself and our own truest nature.

There are some things which we learn to know better in their consequences than in their nature. Sin is one of these things. At every turn, in every circumstance of life, we meet the consequences of sin. The leprosy which disfigures, and finally destroys, human life is sin. The deadly gangrene which is eating at the life of the nations is sin. All that makes life cold and hard, all that petrifies the emotions, that eats out the soul piece by piece, that perverts human tastes and leads their possessors to wallow in the mire, and delight in swill, — this is sin. It is as universal as human life. No purely human life has ever escaped its withering, death-dealing touch.

All the great children of God have had a clear vision of the exceeding terribleness of sin, and a profound sense of the awfulness of its consequences. The prophets, the Baptist, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, and all who have in any way approximated them, knew the terrors of an accusive conscience. They knew what sin is. They knew the meaning of David's words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." Sin to all enlightened, sensitive souls is a great engulfing wave; from which by mere human effort, there is no possibility of escape. But it is not the deep-dyed sinner who recognizes this. Only those with Spirit-anointed eyes begin to see this. Only when Jesus Christ, the incarnation of purity, begins to live in us, and we begin to see through His eyes, do we begin to understand aright the true nature of sin. Life is like a mountain the top of which is reached by a winding path. As we make the circles ye see the same landscape, but from a different height, which somewhat affects its appearance. As we climb the heights with Jesus, and look down upon the things of the world from the more rarefied atmosphere of advancing spirituality, we begin to be able to give a proper appraisalment to the nature of sin.

One point is well established. No man can have an adequate appreciation of the compassionateness of mercy till he knows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. A superficial view of sin is inevitably followed by a shallow view of Christ and His Gospel.

What the world needs today more than anything else is an adequate conception of sin. And there is some evidence that God is leading the world, as it faces the consequences of its own madness, to think more seriously on this subject. What the Church needs is a deeper consciousness of sin. We need to be jarred out of our easy-going complacency by having the

undimmed searchlight of God's truth thrown athwart the bared recesses of our inner life. What we need is the deep, pricking, gnawing consciousness of personal sin. If we could be given such a vision we would get a shock which would sober us. And if we do not allow ourselves to be thus disillusioned, the probability is that one of these days we will get a shock which will stupefy us. Lord give us the vision which, though it will smart and grieve, will lead to a cure.

2. The Cure

Let us now turn from the disease to the cure. There is but one cure for sin and that is forgiveness. Let us consider what forgiveness means, and how it is possible for God to forgive sin.

Human ingenuity is great, and its power for carrying out its devices is sometimes wonderful. But all human skill and power has failed to provide a cure for sin. All kinds of contrivances have been tried, but in vain. Fanatic priests have stood by their heathen altars, assailing the skies with piercing cries, wringing their hands in impotent agony, while their altars dripped human blood; but all in vain. Men, heathen, and sometimes professedly Christian, have set themselves prodigious tasks; but whether able, or not able, to execute their plans, it has never availed to take away sin, no not one, not even the smallest. If they did succeed in pacifying conscience, it was a false peace; one of Satan's numerous devices for keeping people helpless in his bonds. Sin can not be cured in any such way. Water cannot drown sin; fire cannot burn it; no concoction compounded in the laboratory, or brewed in witches' cauldron, can cure sin. There is only one cure, it must be forgiven.

A rather noted English literary man has suggested, rather in jest we trust, that the best way to escape the galling memory of sin is to buy sleeping medicine. Many have apparently invested heavily in this kind of potion. They are exceedingly somnolent with respect to sin. The inner man is practically dead to the accusing voice. But to have a sleepy, drowsy conscience does not mean that sin is cured. Some of the most dreadful diseases give little evidence of the beginning of their death-dealing presence. To make us insensible to sin's presence does not cure it, it must be forgiven.

Another distinguished man, following, no doubt, the purely materialistic theory of mind, namely, that each act of memory, each object recalled, rep-

resents an actual impression made on the substance of the brain, or the presence of a very minute fiber, has suggested that it may yet be possible to locate these separate points of memory, and, if they are disagreeable, and we wish to be rid of them, a way may be found of dissolving them. But if we could all, at will, drink of the waters of forgetfulness, it would not cure the disease of sin. Because we may have forgotten some of the meanness of which we may have been guilty, does not say that it, and all its consequences, have passed out of existence. God's memory never fails. He never forgets. The way to be rid of sin is not to forget it, but to have it forgiven.

Forgiveness! Well, what is forgiveness? It is pardon. It is failure to exact the penalty which in justice might be demanded of an offender. Forgiveness is to deal with an offender as if he had not offended. True forgiveness is a covering up of the past. More, it is a cleansing of festering wounds, it is a purification of life, it is a reception of the forgiven one into fellowship with God who forgives, forgiveness makes the recipient of it partaker of all the Divine blessings.

You remember the story of the mother who was importuned by her little boy to explain how God can forgive sins. She illustrated the subject by asking him to bring his slate on which she knew he had been writing the day before. Finding the slate clean she asked the boy what had become of the problem he had written on it. He explained that he had wiped it out. But where is the writing, asked the mother? I do not know, replied the boy, I wiped it out, it is gone. Perhaps that is about all that can be said, so far as our real understanding is concerned, of forgiveness. It is a truth to be accepted on God's Word, rather than understood. Of this we can be assured, God takes away our sins. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isa. 44:22). "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). But after all, God's forgiveness is not just like the wiping off of a problem from a slate.

There has to be something to make it possible for God to blot out our sin. He could not simply say to the world, I am going to forgive you all; or, I am going to forgive as many of you as want to be forgiven. God is just. He has a character to maintain. God has been grievously offended, His commands violated. His justice had to be satisfied, His holiness vindicated. Our

text says, “If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” And God’s very nature demanded that He should hold them against us till the wrong was righted. But God wanted to free man of his burden, and Divine love found the way. God Himself came, in the person of Jesus Christ, to take man’s place, to pay man’s debt, to acquire for man all that he requires to stand approved in God’s sight. In view of what Christ has done for us as our substitute, we can understand how God can be just, and still forgive, justify, the poor sinner who believes in Christ (Rom. 3:26).

That forgiveness has been made possible only by Christ Jesus is the emphatic teaching of Scripture. It is He who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). In Jesus Christ we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). The Apostle Paul declared to the people of Antioch, but equally applicable to all men, “Be it known therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39). And that there might be no mistake as to the all-inclusive efficacy of the Saviour’s merits, He Himself says, “It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (St. Luke 24:46, 47).

Some years ago, so it is related, an attendant, in the experiment station at Vienna, was guilty of carelessly handling an animal infected with the Bubonic plague. He was infected, and died a frightful death. His physician contracted the disease, and died in fearful agony. The city authorities were thoroughly alarmed. There was eminent danger of the land being ravished by the much dreaded Black Plague, and its population decimated. The people were in terror. All Vienna quaked. Presently a man came from a distant city. He had made a thorough study of the plague. And had found a specific, a valise full of which he carried with him. It did its work, speedily and well. The plague was stopped. Confidence was restored. So it is with sin. There are many nostrums. They do no real good. There is only one real remedy. It is a specific, unfailing in its operation. It is the blood of Jesus Christ. It kills the power of sin. It drives out the poison. It restores to the roseate bloom of spiritual health those who take it according to the God-given directions.

3. How Forgiveness Is Received

It is yet necessary for us to consider the questions, who are the recipients of God's forgiveness, and how this forgiveness is received.

Forgiveness has been prepared for all men. God loved the world. Jesus died for all mankind. The Holy Spirit wants to gather every body. The remedy provided, the blood of Christ, is amply sufficient for all, and will prove efficacious wherever tried. But it does not follow that all will be cured. The remedy does not work automatically. It is not bestowed independently of the attitude of the person for whom it is intended.

The first step necessary to the reception of forgiveness is knowledge of our need of it. The person who does not know that he is diseased will not want a remedy. We must know what sin is, and that we are sinners. We must get away from the very general human habit of magnifying other people's sins, and minimizing our own. The confession of St. Paul, that he was the chief of sinners, must, in a real sense, become our own.

With the knowledge of sin, there must be a true, deep-seated sorrow. This sorrow must not come alone from the ills we have brought on ourselves, or that we anticipate. First of all, and chiefly, it should result from the recognition of the way we have grieved and offended God. David sensed this truth when he cried out, Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned; and done this evil in Thy sight. It must be a grief of the heart that we have brought such shame and suffering on Jesus our friend. Such repentance is needed, but it is not the repentance which gets forgiveness as a reward.

If there is true repentance there will be confession also, though it does not always come easily. David tried to pen up, and live down, a grievous sin of his without confession. But it brought him only added grief. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." Pride ruled David's heart, and sealed his lips; but as long as this was true he could find no peace, because no forgiveness. This confession, however, should be made also to the offended brother, when we have sinned against him as well as against God. And where sins, truly repented of, are honestly confessed they will be forgiven. David could bare witness, "I acknowledged my sins unto Thee, and mine iniquities have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sins (Ps. 32). And the

Lord's promise to all is,"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). Confession must be made of sins truly repented of, but forgiveness is not a reward for confession.

Faith, and faith alone, appropriates forgiveness. God loved the world, and gave His Son, that whosoever believeth in this Son, and the work He did, as the result of which He is able to forgive, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We are justified, that means forgiven, and adopted into the family of God's children by faith alone. Let us thank God that there is such a certain ground of forgiveness.

Brethren of the faith, let us not forget that these words about forgiveness are also for us who are in the Church, and may have been in it practically all our days. Indeed, I think Luther understood it to apply especially to us, and not only in the act of coming into the church, but during all our days in it. He says, "In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." When we accepted the invitation, and came into the Church, we received forgiveness full and free. But though we became God's children, with good intentions, and developing life, we did not become perfect. We still daily sin much. We fail much in our understanding and doing. And if we have been truly growing in grace and strength, we have come to realize as never before that these things are truly sins, deserving of God's displeasure. But because He is our loving Father, and we are his dear children, He daily and richly forgives us. He does this by His Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments.

"Lamb of God, we fall before Thee,
Humbly trusting in Thy cross;
That alone be all our glory,
All things else are only dross.

"Jesus gives us true repentance,
By His Spirit sent from heav'n;
Whispers this transparting sentence:
'Son, thy sins are all forgiv'n.' "

34. The Resurrection Of The Body

Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth. — St. John 5:28, 29.

WHAT A WONDERFUL SERIES of pictures we have spread out before us in the Apostles' Creed. In the First Article we have the sublimely mysterious wonder of creation. No grander, no more awe-inspiring words were ever written than those of the first chapter of Genesis: "In the beginning God said, let there be, ... and there was." No mere human genius ever contrived that form of speech. That is the speech of God.

The Second Article is equally sublime, but of a somewhat different character. It is a sublimity of wisdom and power still, but inter-woven, through and through, with a love higher than heaven in its condescending compassion. It presents to us the spectacle of the infinite God abdicating, for a season, the throne of glory, not only to come down and be associated with mankind, and minister to them in their self-caused misery; but to take into the closest personal, perpetual union with Himself the nature of those He came to serve. Far above anything ever dreamed of in the most daring flights of human imagination, we have here the picture of God in human flesh and form appearing, working to the end that the sons of earth may be won for heaven.

The Third Article is but little, if any, less wonderfully sublime than the other two. Indeed, there is something here closely analogous to the incarnation of the Second Article. We have here presented to us the mysterious, but real and effective presence of God the Holy Spirit, dwelling in, and operating through, the humble agencies of His own choosing, to the end that there may be brought about the restoration of the Divine image in the sons of men.

It is, indeed, a wonderful series of pictures which is here drawn in bold outline for our contemplation. And the practical benefit is all for man. If we turn from this picture, which shows us God's activity for man, to the one drawn on the pages of human history of man's own activity, it is still wonderful. There is much to sadden it is true; but there is also much to quicken the pulse, and bring a glow of pleasure to the face. What vaulting ambitious do we not find among men! What gigantic plans! What great achievements! What deathless hopes! But what is the end of it all! Look! survey the field of human activity. Where are the world-renowned conquerors? Where the dashing heroes who have explored new worlds? Where the constructive geniuses who have built empires? Where the great inventors who have gone so far in harnessing the forces of nature, and making them the servants of man? One word answers all these questions. Death, so far the only unconquered conqueror, has claimed, or is claiming, them all. And is this to be the end? Is God's great work for man, and man's great work for himself, all to end in dissolution? The question of the ages has been, "If a man die, shall he live again?" This question the Scriptures fully answers. And the fuller answer of Scripture is summarized in our Creed when it says, "I believe in ... the resurrection of the body." Let this be the subject of our morning meditation.

1. The Resurrection Of The Body

In the first place we shall be necessitated to consider what is meant by the term, the resurrection of the body.

Humanity in general, pagan as well as Hebrew and Christian, has always believed in man's immortality; the continuity of life after the death of the body. This belief has ever been one of the chief sustaining, strengthening, chastening, elevating forces in human life. Various elements conspire to perpetuate this faith. The abortiveness of so much in man's life, acting on his inmate conception of the complete, the perfect, is an argument in behalf of life and achievements beyond that now and here attainable. Primarily, however, this belief in an existence after this little span of life has been cut short is a remnant of the truth originally implanted in the soul of man. There is immortality written in the very terms of man's creation. It is said, "In the

image of God created He man.” That which in its inner nature bears the impress of God’s image is imperishable.

The belief in man’s immortality was held by the dwellers on the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates who were earlier than Moses and the prophets, or contemporary with them. It was, from earliest times, a cardinal tenet of all the religio-social philosophies of the far East. Immortality was taught by Plato and Socrates in the days after inspired prophetic utterance had ceased in Israel. Some of these utterances, respecting man’s immortality may have been, probably were, conscious, or unconscious, reflections of the inspired teachings of Israel; for here it is that the clearest utterances on this subject in the ancient world are found. But some of them, unquestionably, were but expressions of the God implanted hope which springs perennial in the human breast. The clearest teachings as to the deathless nature of human life we find in the message of Jesus and his inspired Apostles. Jesus did not only boldly proclaim the doctrine of immortality, He demonstrated it as a fact, especially by His own personal victory over the assaults of death.

We must not forget, however, that immortality and resurrection, though closely related, are two distinct subjects. And with respect to the doctrine of the resurrection of man’s body there is by no means the unanimity among men which we find with respect to immortality. Indeed, this doctrine of the resurrection is distinctly a revelation of God’s Word. The general attitude of those not under the influence of this Word is set forth in the conduct of the men of Athens, of whom it is said that “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.” The heathen generally conceive of the dead as moving about in a world of shadows, with but the faint, filmy semblance of bodies. In other words, that the dead beyond the border are indeed but ghosts of their former selves.

The Christian faith is not simply that there is to be a continuity of human life, but that the body is to be raised from the dead, reunited with its animating, controlling spirit; and thus, as a complete human being, not as soul only, but body and soul; continue to live on forever after the great awakening.

Of the two words most commonly used in the New Testament to give expression to the act or fact of coming forth from the dead, and translated “resurrection,” the one, in its verb form, means “to awaken,” the other, to rise up, or be raised up, from the supineness of death to the flush and vigor of life. And, remember, this is affirmed of the body, the body which has

slept in the grave; the body over which has been said the words, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

The body, this complement of organs through which the individual human spirit works, belongs to a complete being. It is part of ourselves, not a mere accident, not a mere vesture, not the temporary prison-house of the soul. The soul does, indeed, survive when the body temporarily falls into decay. It might, in some fashion, subsist eternally without the body. But such a disembodied spirit would never be man in his complete self-hood. Man was not created a mere incorporeal spirit. Before God ever breathed forth the spirit which made man a living soul, He had fashioned the temple for it. And it is evident on every hand that it was never intended that this spirit should subsist without the body. Had not man’s body become sin-infected, and no longer fit, in its present condition, to be the eternal tabernacle of the soul, the latter would never, even temporarily, have been dis severed from the body. But after the process of bodily purification, of which death is the means, has been completed, there is to be a resurrection of the body. The disembodied spirit will again take up its natural habitat, never more to be severed. This resurrection will be universal. All the dead shall be raised. This is what our Creed means when it says. “I believe in ... the resurrection of the body.”

As to the nature of the resurrection body, or, as the Apostle puts it, “How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” we have presented a problem concerning which we should not be too inquisitive. To this question there is no definite answer in either nature or Revelation. All that we have in either are certain analogies which shed light, but do not fully explain. The most striking illustration of Scripture is that of the grain sown into the ground, which decays and yet perpetuates itself. The conclusion of the great Apostle is, “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ... As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.”

There is much here that we, in our present state of knowledge, do not, cannot, fully comprehend. The resurrection body will have passed beyond the confines and limitations which obtain in the realm of purely physical things. But everywhere the teaching of Scripture is that the resurrection body is to be the same as the body we now carry, just as the spirit which is to inhabit it is to be the same spirit which left it at death. The only differ-

ence in the body will be that it will be sinless, perfect, glorified, made celestial, and fit for heaven.

2. The Foundation

The Ground on which we build our faith in the resurrection of our bodies.

Belief in immortality, as we have seen, is as wide spread as the races of men. Addison thus voiced Plato's thoughts in His Cato:

“It must be so — Plato, thou reasonest well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or, whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us:
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.”

The Christian poet has expressed the true doctrine. He says that this universal dread of falling into naught and longing after immortality, is heaven's intimation to man of an eternal existence. And man has a body as well as a soul. But the participation of the former with the latter in the future life was not by any means universally believed, and when entertained did not rest on any clearly defined ground. There are hints and prophecies in nature of a resurrection of our bodies, science is not without revelations which throws light on the possibility of a resurrection, and the possible nature of etherealized matter; but the human soul wants more than intimations of the fact of our resurrection. We want assurance. Can it be obtained? Where shall we find it? In God's revealed Word.

The Scriptures of both Testaments teach a resurrection of the body. The patriarch Job could say: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job. 19:25, 26). Isaiah holds out to his distressed people a hope that looked beyond the grave, a future lot in which their bodies would have part. “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they rise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in

dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (26:19).

In the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles the resurrection of the body is one of the most frequently stated truths. With them there is no question about eternal life. There was little argument about it. They spoke of eternal life with as much certainty as they did of the present time. About the resurrection of the body more was said, for it may well be that in the olden time this was a truth not as clearly grasp as was the truth of immortality. Listen to the plain statements of Jesus on this subject: “The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall here His voice, and shall come forth” (St. John 5:28). “I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (St. John 11:25). There is no truth more clearly, or more emphatically, taught in God’s Word, and especially in the New Testament, than this of the resurrection of the body.

In addition, however, to the direct teaching of Jesus and the Apostles on the subject of the resurrection of the body, there is an historical fact which makes assurance doubly sure. It is the actual resurrection of the dead and buried body of Jesus Christ. If He had not risen then we might entertain doubts about our resurrection. But He has arisen. Of this there can be no doubt. One of the most liberal of American theologians says: “The resurrection of Jesus Christ seems to me, on the whole, the best attested fact of ancient history.” Now Christ’s resurrection was of the body. “He showed unto them His hands and His side.” He said: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” Jesus’ resurrection shows the possibility of a resurrection. What God can do for one He can do for all. Jesus arose from the dead as the forerunner, the first fruits, from the dead. If we believe God’s Word, if we believe the words of Christ, we must believe in the resurrection of the body. It is certified by His word, and His words are proven by His deed.

Brethren, let us not be robbed of this precious truth of the resurrection of our bodies. And we are likely to be unless we are careful and prayful. The wise men of the world tell us it is impossible. And not a few of those who regard themselves as the leaders of thought in the Church, no longer believe in a real resurrection of the body, or the flesh. The liberal American theologian of whom we spoke before, and who asserted so positively his belief in Jesus’ resurrection, says in the same article from which the former statement was quoted: “I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I do not believe

in the resurrection of the body.” And a good many, who want to be known as advanced thinkers, profess the same view. But we should like to know what the fine appearing phrase: “The resurrection of the dead” means of it does not mean the resurrection of the body.” The soul, the personality, does not rest in the grave. The Scriptures deny the doctrine of the soul-sleepers. Every particle of Scripture evidence supports the oft repeated plain statements of the same Word that the resurrection of the dead means the resurrection of the body, the flesh. On this subject the resurrection of Jesus in the flesh is the last word.

No one denies for a moment that the resurrection of the body rises above the ordinary processes of nature, so far as we now understand them. In other words, the resurrection is a miracle. But miracles are possible with God now as ever. Indeed, miracles may be, when we come to understand them, but the higher level of God’s ordinary working processes. God’s entire creation is filled with the life of God. It is a self-consistent organism. Life is everywhere to triumph over death. Not to believe in the resurrection of the body is to disbelieve many of the plainest statements of our Saviour, and at the same time it means to give up many closely related truths. That reason alone can not grasp the truth we readily admit; but to all objections based on this ground Jesus replies with the all-sufficient answer: “Ye know not the power of God.”

Brethren, whatever questions may come to us, and they do come often and persistently, they come as we peer wistfully into the future; they come as we see our loved ones lowered into the grave; let us take them to Jesus, to Jesus of the Easter morn, and the after-Easter life. The clearest ray of light shot into the future comes from His open grave. He went into death and came back. Across the wild waste there is one footprint which has gone both ways, into the darkness and back into the light. The future is not pathless any more. And, blessed thought, Jesus made the journey only for our good. He died to destroy death. He arose that He might give life to others. If we walk with Him we are safe. All others will leave us as we enter the gloom, Jesus goes with us; and assures us that we shall share in His life and His glory, — and this in our full selves, soul and resurrection body.

3. Practical Applications

Are there any practical, everyday results to which these reflections should lead us?

First of all, the resurrection takes the gloom out of life, it makes life worth while. Death is tragic. To be called from life with its tasks but touched, or only half finished, is pathetic. It is but little less so to have achieved some measure of success, and then say farewell to it all. Death is not the saddest of all sad things only if what is called death in this world means birth in another; and if the things which death requires us to relinquish here are compensated by larger gains beyond. The resurrection of the body is a rift in the cloud which lets the light in.

The truth of a resurrection is of a nature to dispel fear, the fear of which the world is so full, which weighs us down, which intrudes in the very banquet hall, and ever and anon darkens the face and chokes the voice of those who sit as members of the family circle. Think of present conditions, we are suffering from the shock of war, blood flows in streams, millions of the flower of earth's manhood have fallen in their prime, other millions of hearts are bleeding because of their going; those who were to guide men in the paths of peace have proved traitors to their trust; the demoniac passions of greed, hate, and lust are in the ascendancy; but at all times death reigns, circles are broken, hearts bleed, and plans fail. And is man's little life thus to go out in the darkness of failure. No, this is not the end. This is but the infant, the preparatory stage of life. The grave is to open, and life's eternal day is to stretch from that time onward. The tangled skein will there be unraveled, its broken ends gathered up and mended.

Mended, did we say? that depends upon how we have lived and died. There is no change in the direction of life after death. The endless future will be the confirmation, and the unfolding of the forces which are molding our lives when the death summons comes. So the thought of resurrection and eternal life come in the nature of a warning to those whose lives are not what they should be, not cleansed by Christ's blood, not adorned with His righteousness, not ruled by His Spirit. Oh, ye thoughtless and worldly minded men, lost, absorbed, in the hot pursuit of the decaying things of this perishing earth, be warned betimes; remember that you are not escaping responsibilities, or sinking into nothingness when you yield your breath, and return to the dust. The Son of God is going to call you, too, from the grave to receive the reward of your labors. Are you ready to meet the Judge, and

hear His just sentence? Only on one condition, if you are wholly His now. We need not be afraid of Jesus as the Judge, if we know Him as our Savior.

To the child of God the thought of a coming resurrection is full of comfort, as well as full of inspiration. Few truths have such a decisive effect on right living as this. It makes men unselfish, it helps them to bear responsibilities and reverses, it gives them a true sense of the dignity and worth of human life, and of the worth of those things which are wrought into life, of the superior value of character in comparison with mere possessions. And as men and women grow old walking with Christ Jesus new joys come which more than compensate for those which are lost. The strength of body wanes, but it is given them more clearly to feel the supporting arm on which they lean. The eye grows dim, but the light grows brighter; indeed, to the godly it is promised that, in a very special sense, it shall be light at eventide. And as they go down into the valley called the valley of death, they find that it is, after all, but the shadow of death, and they fear no evil, for the Lord of life is with them. And on the morrow He wakes them for their eternal day. "Death is swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

35. Eternal Death

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. — St. Matt. 25:41.

AS WE SAW LAST SUNDAY, it is the out-spoken affirmation of all Scripture that there is to be a universal resurrection of the dead. As the next step, every thinking mind is confronted with the question, — after the resurrection, what?

Humanity in this life, in a general way, seems to be moving onward toward a common destiny. There are some differences in education, point of view, and deportment; but in the great fundamental experiences of life there is little difference. And all come to the same end. Stripped of all the little fripperies of life each one becomes heir to a little heritage, four by six. But back of this seeming sameness there is a fundamental difference. The supreme and infallible teacher of the ages, Jesus Christ, tells us that the children of men are moving forward in distinct, divergent columns. Jesus tells us there are two paths leading through this world. They are not marked by any visible, tangible boundaries. The travelers on each are not always distinguished by widely contrasted conduct. Sometimes, it is true, conduct proclaims the essential character of the doer, and the path on which he travels. But whether men can discern it or not, the clear-seeing, all-seeing eye of God never fails to distinguish on which path one walks: the broad way where God is never found, where self occupies the center of the stage, and the end — a withered, ruined life, — or the narrow way of restricted human fellowship, but where God is never missing, and the end — blessedness.

Coming events cast their shadows before. The future is being decided by the present. The resurrection is but God's call to the body to share the eternal destiny of the soul. And the eternal destiny of the soul is decided by our days of probation here and now. The Judgment will be no more than the announcement of the results men have attained in this life.

Now we are ready to answer the question. After the resurrection, what? The Judgment day presents to view the assembly of all humanity, not one being absent. Eternity spreads out before them. But it will not be the same to all. The distinctions which marked men here will continue to mark them there. Indeed, they shall continue to walk on, forever and forever, in the paths they have chosen here.

As a subject suggested by the closing statement of our Creed, but the very opposite of its positive truth, let us consider for our morning meditation — Eternal Death.

1. Eternal Death

First of all, let us consider the import of these fearful words, — eternal death.

You may be questioning in your mind why we have elected to discuss this unpleasant topic when it is not mentioned in our Creed, and not explicitly even in the explanation. As to form we might be excused for omitting the subject. The Creed says only this, “I believe in ... the life everlasting.” Luther, in the explanation, modifies this by the statement that eternal life becomes the possession only of the believer in Christ, leaving the condition of the unbeliever to be drawn by inference. This is because the Creed, in its brief, elliptical sentences, is an expression only of the Christian’s subjective faith, that which he believes with respect to himself. As to form, then, we could have omitted this subject. And assuredly it is not an agreeable one to treat. Besides, the weak sentimentalists, the doubters of God’s Word, and those whose own consciences accuse them, would like for us to omit it. Aye, there’s the rub. There is great need for the study of this topic. Many seared consciences need to be reached, and, if possible, aroused. There are many people before whose eyes there is no fear of God, we should at least attempt to reach them. And after all, the subject of eternal life is but one side of a great problem. Both sides belong to a full, impartial view of it. May the Spirit of Him who has revealed all saving truth guide us into the knowledge and belief of it.

Eternal death. These words do not mean the eternal extinction of life, or the cessation of conscious existence. There are those who hold that in the future world the soul of the wicked shall die, just as the body does here, —

that the time comes, sooner or later, when the soul ceases to act, to feel, to be; and that it will never be restored. This they consider eternal punishment by way of deprivation. It is the loss of the supreme good. This is not a doctrine of Scripture, it is found alone in the imagination of men.

The condition of the lost in the future world is called death because it lacks everything which makes life blessed, it is in possession of everything which makes life wretched. The center of it all is that they are excluded from fellowship with God. God is life, and only that which basks in the sunlight of His presence deserves to be called life. In addition to this loss, which is, in itself, a living death, there are many positive ills to be borne. There will be the consciousness that the door of hope is eternally closed. We have all had moments when dark despair sat brooding on our brow. There is nothing worse. In that land where there is an eternal dying, and death would be a welcome visitor, but never comes, there the very atmosphere will be impregnated with despair. And forever and forever there will be the living on of a life that is disjointed, disgruntled, inharmonious. Sin will be going on doing its deadly work through the ages. The minds of men will be disillusioned as to its deadly nature, but it will be fastened upon them like an incurable leprosy. And to cap all, eternity must be spent in most intimate fellowship with that powerful, but malignant Spirit by whom, in life, they were blinded, enamored, snared and ruined. Their eyes will now be opened. They will know his true nature. They will loathe him. But they will not be able to escape him. The very essence of hell is to be tied up forever with this personification of all sin.

Instead of eternal death being extinction of being, it is going to be an existence capable of enduring the most intensified ills, ills beyond the power of human speech adequately to portray. The endless pathway of hopelessness stretching out before the lost will grip and gripe their souls like a vise. There will be the revolt, the fruitless revolt, of the whole being against its own state, a state of false, discordant, inharmonious action. Sin, which has wrought all man's ruin for this life, will continue forever its cancerous, corroding, blighting work; ever eating, but never consuming. The whole being of the eternally lost will be involved in such a condition of superlative wretchedness that it is often represented, even by Christ Himself, by the figure of a raging, inextinguishable fire.

And this condition is to continue eternally. Eternity! The mind of man stands impotent in the presence of this thought. We get but a faint, shadowy

conception of what eternity is by contrasting it with time. A couple of hundred years seems a long time. A thousand, two or three thousand years can be but faintly comprehended. But all time, as Plato said so long ago, is but the moving shadow of eternity. Time marks change. In time there is conflict, revolution, progress. Eternity predicates not only endless duration, but fixity of condition. Time is the period of probation. Eternity is the oceanic calm of unbroken rest in God, or the chained fixity of Confirmation in sin.

The ancients, we are told, thus represented eternity. Somewhere, they said, lies a diamond, mountain like in size. Every hundred years a little bird flew to its top to sharpen its bill. When this mountain-like diamond, has, in this way, been worn away, said they, it will represent but a second of eternity.

Eternity! Unfortunately there are so many people of such shallow capacity, with souls so dwarfed and blinded by sin, that even the thought of eternity cannot jar them from their indolent, sleepy indifference. Eternity! Have we decided, by the grace of God, where we are going to spend it? Eternity! As parents, preachers, teachers, has this word taken sufficient hold on us; infused us with enough energy to lead us to warn our children, pupils, companions, hearers of an eternity without God?

2. The Terrible Doctrine's Source

Whence comes this terrible doctrine of a life of endless darkness and misery for the finally godless and impenitent?

We have no hesitancy in calling this a terrible doctrine. It must needs be a terrible doctrine that deals with terrible facts. It makes one shudder to contemplate it. But there is no sense, because of this, in closing ones eyes to the truth, or denying it. All sin is terrible. The consequences of it in this world are terrible. The suffering, the physical and mental ruin it works here and now are terrible. The obtuseness, the moral blindness, the atrocities to which it leads are terrible. Is not sin leading to many things all around us which make our hearts bleed, draw heavily on our sympathies, and sometimes stir to the extreme our indignation? Does it make these things not to be if we shut our eyes to them, or turn our backs on them? They exist, and people suffer from them, in spite of all possible denials. Just so it is with eternal death. This is but another, and the final step in the progress of sin.

Eternal death, in its essence, is but a life in the eternally throttling grasp of sin.

A former great preacher of England, a man of very liberal views on many subjects, declared that “everlasting punishment is written on the whole scroll of life.” Some of us, he says, are suffering from things we did forty years ago. We are all suffering, more or less, all the time, from the ravages of sin. We all know that sin has kept many good things from us. We have been tantalized by glimpses of unattainable good. We are all more or less baffled, and hindered, and mocked by some malevolent spirit which has laid its withering hand upon us. We feel the nemesis of judgment constantly athwart our pathway. Is it not a reasonable deduction that unless this disease is cured, this condition righted, the attendant circumstances will continue?

It is a central and abiding truth of the universe that wrong doing cannot escape judgment. It is written in the book of nature, as well as in Revelation, that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” God is not mocked. Man may deny this; but denying the theory, they are still left to face the fact. At the heart of all things is the principle of judgment, and there is no escaping its inevitable operation. men may rest assured that their sins will find them out. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.”

Though there are present indications in all nature, and especially in all human life, that there is an inexorable law of judgment, a punishment for all evil doing, we Christians base our faith only on the teaching of God’s holy Word. It is taught by the prophet who declares that the godless shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. And again, “Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” The Revelator says, “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and forever.” And above all, the loving, compassionate Jesus says, to the godless — “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” If there is no eternal death, there is no guarantee of eternal life; for the words expressive of duration are the same in both cases.

Some people not only throw up their hands in horror at the mention of this doctrine, but they try to deny it on the score of God’s character. They say it is altogether contrary to His loving, merciful nature to inflict such a punishment on man. And they sometimes express themselves as if those who hold this doctrine of God’s Word thought that He has a vindictive delight in torturing certain people. Nothing is farther from the truth. God is

not to blame because there is such a state as eternal death. And He takes no pleasure in inflicting it. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Recall also Christ's lament over godless Jerusalem. God has always, and everywhere shown Himself to be yearning to bless the children of men. He is always watching for opportunities to surprise them with fuller light, and overwhelm them with multiplied acts of kindness. He is always saying, I will dig around this tree, and nurture it carefully, next year it may bear fruit. In all things the goodness of God operates to lead men to repentance. All God's plans have as their aim man's recovery, restoration, reinstatement in the household of God. But God has an honor to sustain, and the character of a home to maintain; and when men persist in their evil way of unbelief and godless conduct, ruin themselves here in this world, and then go out into eternal darkness, it is not God's fault, but their own. God says to such people, depart, you cannot come into heaven; but in the truest sense of the word they have excluded themselves. And if God should take such a person, and set him down hard by the throne of glory, it would not be heaven to him. Such a man carries hell with him. A man has hell in his own heart before he is ever consigned to that dark and terrible place where life is ten thousand-fold worse than death. Says Milton, describing such a life.

"Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell;
And in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

3. Practical Considerations

Some of the practical results which should follow a careful study of the subject of eternal death are worthy of consideration.

One of the emotions resulting from the contemplation of this truth, on the part of Christians, should be a feeling of most profound gratitude. We have escaped this terrible fate. Once we were in the way which led to eternal death. We have been delivered. Not by any special merit of our own. Indeed, if strict justice had been meted out, this would have been our portion. God's love and mercy provided the remedy which saves from it, — Jesus Christ. God's goodness melted our cold hearts, broke down our opposition,

and enabled us to receive Christ as our life. If we have come to appreciate, in but some faint measure, what it is from which we have been saved, then in our hearts there will be the continuous refrain. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

Gratitude, however, will be coupled with the most painstaking care. We have been delivered from the grip of spiritual death, but the corruption caused by it in our nature has not yet all been purged out. And every particle of it means danger. It is like a poison lingering in the system, ready to break out whenever the conditions permit. This is the reason God everywhere in His Word, and through our own experience with the evil, keeps warning us of the danger threatening us. Will we be warned? Will we heed the exhortation to watch and pray?

When it is necessary to use, about the premises, some preparation dangerous to life if unwisely used, we label it — poison. We keep it secluded. We warn every one against it. Our country, at the present time, is greatly agitated by the threatened scourge of infantile paralysis. All kinds of precautionary measures are being taken to isolate the cases already developed, and to protect those most susceptible to the disease. The best medical talent of the land is busily engaged in the endeavor to discover the real nature of the disease, and to find a remedy for it. These are all temporary, physical ills. And they are as atoms to infinity in comparison with eternal death, which is the combination of all possible ills in the undying death of one individual. Ought not, then, every sense be alert to guard ourselves against this monster getting a grip on us?

In fighting this monster there can be, however, no shadow of selfishness. The man who has been delivered from this plague of plagues will never say, well, thank the Lord, I am safe, I do not care what becomes of others. He who is truly saved is desirous of saving others. Let us, then, take up the cry, and sound forth the warning. O thoughtless one, if you have not made your peace with God, consider these words, if you have found this peace you will assuredly consider what they mean to others —

Eternity! O what a pang!
Eternity! No serpent's fang
Could send that thrill of terror;
When I resolve thy clanking chains,
Thy dark abyss of deathless pains,
My soul is filled with horror.
O search the universe around,
No equal terrors can be found.
"Eternity! terrific word!
Within the heart a piercing sword!
Beginning without ending!
Eternity! unmeasured time!
I sink beneath the thought sublime,
That I to thee am tending:
Lord Jesus, when it pleaseth Thee,
Grant me Thy blest eternity!"

Golladay, R. E. (1917). Eternal Death. In *Sermons on the Catechism: The Apostles' Creed* (Vol. II, pp. 374—451). Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

36. Life Everlasting

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to all inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. — 1 Pet. 1:3—5.

THE APOSTLES' CREED CLOSES with a shout of victory. We are not yet in full possession of all the fruits of the victory, but it is ours nevertheless. Life everlasting is God's gift. All that it means we shall never know till we step across the portal, and experience it in God's presence. But that it is prepared for us we are just as sure as we are that God lives, and is a faithful God. And eternal life has begun in us already. It is working in our souls and all our members. We shall never lose it save by willful rejection.

You know the story of Bunyan's pilgrim. He started out floundering through the slough of despondency, bearing his ever-pressing burden. He was constantly meeting with difficulties and discouragements. There were many battles to be fought, privations to be endured, wounds to be suffered. But finally, as he climbed the detectable mountains, the old, wearisome burden fell from his back. He was as a new man in a new world. A picture, this, of your life, and mine. We are God's children. A great change has been wrought in us. The great remedy, the blood of Jesus Christ, has washed away our sins. And it is at work to effect a perfect cure of all our ills. And no power on earth, or in hell, outside of ourselves, can keep it from succeeding. But in the meanwhile there is much to impede the progress of the remedy. There is much feebleness to be overcome. There is much faulty vision which obscures the beauties that might otherwise be seen, and magnifies and makes more terrifying the threatening evils. But the remedy is working. One of these days the feeble knees shall be made strong, the bleared eyes shall be given full orbed vision. And we shall stand, clothed in the white robes of the saints, with palms of victory in our hands, with the great throng around the throne of the Lamb, crying: "Alleluia, for the Lord

God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” This is the eternal life in the faith and foretaste of which we constantly make confession in the closing words of the Apostles’ Creed, and of which we shall speak this morning.

1. The Nature Of Everlasting Life

Let us first of all inquire as to the nature of that existence we call life everlasting.

We are so constituted that we like to know. It is a God-implanted thirst. There are substitutes for knowledge which drive away the thirst, but do not meet the needs of which the thirst is only the indication. Let us beware of their deadly effects. On the other hand, let us be careful to avoid mere speculation. Of this there is a great deal with respect to eternal life. Let us not allow speculation to supplant revelation.

Eternal life! O heaven high, heaven wide subject! How it fascinates the devout imagination. How it grips the souls of God’s children. But there is little of detail which we can say about it. The Scriptures indicate that human mind is incapable of comprehending more than the mere outline of what heaven is, just as human vision, in its present state, can not endure the undiminished rays of Christ’s Divine brightness. And we find that human language is an inadequate vehicle for conveying even the partial revelations of the glories of the life in God’s presence. But we are not by any means left in the dark on this great subject. Voyagers tell us that in certain tropic, or semi-tropic regions, long before land is in sight, or seen only in dim, shadowy outline, the balmy breezes bear to them the odor of the sweet spices which grow there in luxuriance. The voyager from this experience would not be able to give an accurate description of the land he approaches, but he knows something about it. He knows it is a land of beauty and fragrance. He knows there are many things to entrance the spirit of those sensitive to beauty. So is it with us with respect to heaven, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). But the breath of God’s Spirit hath blown from that celestial shore, bearing to the responsive soul visions and odors of that ravishing land of pure delight.

Much of the description of life eternal is by way of what we shall not then experience. So much of the present life is filled with burdens and tribulations, that our fondest dreams have to do with an existence freed from them. The inspired writers accommodate themselves to this condition. St. Paul expresses his hope thus, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). And the Revelator, in his matchless description of the future state, expresses it thus, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). As the mother takes her sick, or injured, child to her bosom, consoles it, and dries its tears, so God will do for us, only more effectually, for that which causes these troubles will be forever removed.

But the description which God gives us of that which is to be is not all negative. Jesus, in his high-priestly prayer, says: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (St. John 17:24). We shall be with Jesus. That which our weak eyes are not now able to behold in all its fullness of brightness will then be our constant contemplation. There will be a realization of the faith of the man of God who strengthened himself with the thought that "in his flesh he should see God."

Even this is not all. We children of God shall not only see His glory, but be partakers of His glory. In this same prayer Jesus says, "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them." Elsewhere He tells us that in our future home we shall be like the angels in heaven (St Mark 12:25). Just what this means is beyond our reach, but it is enough to fill us with joy and gladness. But there is something even better than this. St. John, recognizing the fragmentary character of our knowledge of this great truth, says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1 Jn. 3:2). Like Christ. That is too much for our comprehension. But it satisfies every one who has anything like an adequate understanding of the transcendent beauty of Christ's life. Like Christ. Is that not enough to arm us for every conflict? to cheer us in every dark night of trial?

Eternal life contains a great deal more than the two words, life plus eternity. Eternal life is not merely endless existence. It means endless life in its highest possible state of existence. It means that all that is piecemeal and

temporary has passed away forever. It means that the absolutely perfect has come, that life has reached its highest altitude. It means that all the fulness and richness that this human vessel can receive of the goodness of God has been made ours.

And, let us remember, that of this glorious, blessed state there shall be no end. At the right hand of God these joys are to be experienced for evermore (Ps. 16:11). Our text tells us that it is an inheritance which is incorruptible, and unfading. And not only is it in its own nature imperishable, but there is no power in the universe which can destroy it, or take it from us (St. Jn. 16:22). As our text says, the strong arm of God's power is thrown around us for our protection. What a thought for our meditation is this! Rightly understood and appreciated how it supports us in our present trials. How it nerves men, who have grasped it, for more heroic effort.

2. The Ground of Certainty

It will be profitable for us to inquire into the nature of the ground of our certainty as to the existence of this eternal life.

“I believe in ... the life everlasting.” Is this a found dream which human imagination has conjured up as a palliative for our many ills? A dream which we have fooled ourselves into believing is the truth? Not so, not so. This is one of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith. If this be not well founded then all the rest is of minor importance. The moral teaching of Christianity would still be good, but it would be but a temporary good if not followed by eternal life. And the more perfect and glorious the picture of this future life, the more terrible the disappointment if it is an unfounded dream. But it is not a delusion. There is no truth better attested.

It is true, Christian people are not the only ones who entertain the hope of a future existence. Practically all men, of every degree of culture, and lack of culture, have some kind of conception of a future life. This is a faint recollection, sometimes an inarticulate throbbing, of the deathless nature which God breathed out of His own fullness of life, and which became the inmost essence of man's nature. But this indwelling testimony of the human soul is not the only, nor yet the chief, ground on which we Christians base our hope, our certainty, of a future, an eternal life. If we built only on this feeling we would be fluctuating between the widest extremes. Today we

would be in the seventh heaven of hope, tomorrow probably in the darkest hell of despondency.

We Christians have been taught to say, I believe in the life everlasting, in the light of God's revelation. Our faith is built on the rock, the rock of God's truth. We are more certain of eternal life than we are of any demonstration of any mere earthly thing, however absolute it may claim to be. We know what awaits us because God has told us. It was revealed to the people of the Old Testament. Job, David, and the prophets received the revelation, and proclaimed it to the world. And I need not tell you that the New Testament is full of this truth. The Gospel record starts out by telling us that God so loved the world, that He gave He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might have eternal life. Jesus says, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and give unto them eternal life. But more than this, Jesus Christ has demonstrated that there is a life beyond the grave. He did it by raising the dead to life. Above all, He did it by Himself coming forth triumphantly from the dead. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This is our faith. It is not built on human feeling, or speculation. It is not founded on analogies found in nature. We may use all these things as illustrations and corroborations; but as a truth on which to securely build, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us; but our Father which is in heaven.

This promise of eternal life is one of which not only the Church in general may be certain, but you and I, as individuals, may be equally certain of it. God does not call men as multitudes, but as individuals. Salvation is given to individuals. And eternal life, which is the specific name of salvation beyond the resurrection, is given to individuals. And we do not need to wait for the experience of the Judgment day for this certainty. We say, in the explanation of the Third Article, I believe that God will give unto me, and all believers in Christ, eternal life. It is fanaticism to be certain of something for which we have no Divine promise. It is distrust of God not to be certain of that which He has clearly promised. If one condition is met we can be absolutely certain of this greatest of all blessings. If Christ is our Saviour then eternal life is certain. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John

10:28). We are kept by the power of God. Indeed, those who believe in Christ now have working in them the active principle the consummation of which is perfected eternal life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36).

Our explanation of each of the three articles of the Creed ends with this sentence, “This is most certainly true.” Is this your individual confession? Then with what calmness we should bear our temporary ills; with what courage and strength we should take up the duties of life. Let us keep our eyes on the glory that is set before us.

3. Where?

A word yet as to the place where this life eternal is to be spent.

Eternity is to be spent by God’s children in heaven. Much has been said of this place which is nothing but speculation. We are not going to speculate. The Scriptures generally speak of heaven as above. This is very appropriate. Everything beautiful, pure, noble we speak of as exalted. But the locality is not given. And, for my part, I am not much concerned about the locality. Knowing what I do about its character, I am content for the locality of heaven to come as a discovery. There is plenty of room in infinite space for heaven.

One erroneous idea we need to guard against. Heaven is not merely a condition. It is a place. We are not going to be eternal wanderers. Man wants a home, and he is going to have it. Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also. He tells us again that when He comes for us to take us home, He is going to come visibly, that every eye shall see Him. And unquestionably, in the light of the evidence, we shall continue to see Him. He is going to be visibly present with his people.

To the children of God some fore-gleams and foretastes of heaven are vouchsafed even in this world. Wherever Jesus comes to place His hand in blessing on one of his children’s brow, and breath His word of pardon and peace, there a little corner of heaven has come down to earth. You have walked, may be, in some little garden of delights here below; a garden of flowers, singing birds, and sweet companionships; peace brooded on the perfume-laden air; the rich, red blood of health coursed through your veins; fortune smiled on you; friends were true; and every prospect gladdened. If

God was in your heart this was a little vision of heaven. But after all only a glimmering ray of heaven's light penetrating the leafy forests of human ills to cheer us on the way; a prophecy of the beauties and blessings awaiting us beyond the river.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I John saw the holy city New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And one of the seven angels carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descended out of heaven from God. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.”

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Originally published 1908 by F. J. Heer Printing Co., Columbus, Ohio.

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Originally published 1917 by The Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, Ohio.

486 – v5

ISBN: 9798651680788 (paperback)

How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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