

The Tree of Life: A Running Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Word of God

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NOTE

Most of the quotations in the Commentary on the Psalms that are not documented will be found either in the Scriptural text, or in Swedenborg's "Summaries of the Internal Sense of the Prophets and Psalms." The Apocalypse Explained and Apocalypse Revealed present the spiritual sense of Revelation word for word, and form the basis for this Running Commentary on it.

Abbreviations for Works by Swedenborg

- A. Arcana Coelestia
- C. Doctrine of Charity
- Can. Canons of the New Church
- D. L. Doctrine of the Lord
- E. Apocalypse Explained
- H. Heaven and Hell
- L. Doctrine of Life
- M. Marital Love
- S. Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture
- T. True Christian Religion

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The knowledge of God grows from its inception in infancy with advancing years as man "walks in the light of life." John 8:12.

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. Gen. 2:9.

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Ps. 1.

In the midst of the street of the Holy City, and on either side of the river of the water of life was the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Rev. 22:2.

Introduction

Viewing the Word of God as a Drama of Life, Genesis serves as a Prologue, setting forth "GOD'S GIFT OF HEAVEN"—the gift of "remains" in childhood and youth. These remains are "not only the goods and truths which a man has learned from the Lord's Word from infancy, and has thus (unconsciously) impressed on his memory, but all the states derived thence, states of innocence, states of love toward parents, brothers, teachers, friends, states of charity toward the neighbor, and of pity for the poor and needy; in a word all states of good and truth by which man is man." (A. 651.)

Life then begins at twenty. The drama presents the way in which the content of God's Gift of Heaven is worked out consciously and intelligently from day to day, and made our own.

The First Act of the Drama of Life, beginning with Exodus depicts the evolution of "THE LOVE OF OBEDIENCE." Israel in Egypt plays the part of God's children. We start life at the bottom, at sea level. We are neither committed to good or evil. But we cannot remain neutral indefinitely. We must "either share the guilt of this world, or go to another planet." (G. B. Shaw.) Reformation begins with our earliest efforts to do as we are told without question, to master evil habits in plain violation of the letter of the law. (Moses.) Freedom by conquest establishes our right to the first bit of heaven in the soul. The first act in the drama closes with Reuben, Gad and Manasseh in possession of their lots on the farther side of Jordan.

"The Former Prophets" occupy the stage in the Second Act, unfolding the growth of "THE LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOR." The conquest of the land, and the expansion of the kingdom to its farthest limits in David's time, represent the growth of God's kingdom on earth through the establishment of the square deal in human relationships, in accordance with the requirements of a conscience of what is just and fair. But this act ends with the dispersion of the ten tribes by Assyria, and with the captivity of Judah in Babylon. A "greater love" is necessary to bring into the light for judgment the deeper evils here represented, and round out the regenerate life.

"The Latter Prophets" in the Third Act, opening to view "THE LOVE OF GOD," reach the critical point in the drama,—the Diaspora—and show the way out through the promised advent of the Lord. A good understanding of the message of the latter prophets, sharpening the perception of the love of self and the world in the heart, is invaluable to an understanding of the Lord's inner life and teaching, although it is equally true that that life and teaching are our best help to grasp the meaning of prophecy throughout.

The Gospels, the Fourth Act, present the denouement of the Drama, "THE REDEMPTION." Having fulfilled the spirit of "the law and the prophets," the Lord in his public ministry, death and resurrection, manifested the last steps in man's redemption, making his Human Divine even to the flesh and bones.

Revelation then figures as the Epilogue of the Drama. In its inmost meaning it contains the record of what the Lord met in Himself during the forty days preceding his Ascension, in anticipation of the experiences of the First Christian Church up to the eighteenth century. All this is now within the new spirit at work reconstructing civilisation, establishing "THE CROWN OF ALL THE CHURCHES," "a community of the spirit issuing in a community of life" the world over.

In the regenerate life "the love of obedience," in Act First, does not stop functioning when "the love of the neighbor," in Act Second, becomes a ruling principle in life. The love of obedience is basal in forming and sustaining character throughout life, and becomes an established ruling principle in manhood, This is represented by Saul anointed king of all Israel. It even ranks above worship, as Samuel declared to Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Neither does the love of the neighbor abdicate, when "the love of God," in Act Third, is enthroned in the heart. We are taught in childhood to consider the rights and interests of others as much as our own. We never cease to wrestle with the problem of according equal rights to all, represented by the throne of David. We only feebly take in the meaning of the Song of David, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

As for the love of God, it enters the field of consciousness in childhood in the perception of good and evil, although it does not become a dominating principle until late in life, which is represented by the enthronement of Solomon. Neither is it put to any real test in life, as pictured in the latter prophets, right away. Ripe experience and trials alone can give a comprehensive grasp of Solomon's Song, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Saul, David and Solomon—David in the center—are pivotal figures in God's Word. In like manner Obedience, Neighborliness, and Reverence are pivotal principles in character. The first is established through comparatively little combat, the second through perpetual conflict, and the third without any fight, but through the acutely painful process of submitting one's own will to the will of God, until the last principle has become the first, and first last, in answer to the petitions which the Lord Himself has placed on our lips, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

These generalisations, give the key notes to the successive movements of the great symphony of life. "The Book of Life" is no ordinary composition. There is no other book like it. The complete conception of the Incarnation is involved in the first verse, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And the whole of the Lord's life on earth is involved in his last words, "Surely I come quickly, Amen." The Lord Himself is present in the Word throughout from the beginning to the end, even as the oak tree is in the acorn from which it springs to the acorn which it produces. It only needs the simple-hearted prayer throughout life, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," (Rev. 22:20), and the living word proceeds to take form in Christian lives. "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

This commentary makes no claim to perfection, but is presented rather as a helper for others to supplement, to correct and to clarify. The better our understanding of the Word, the more intimate our knowledge of the way of the cross, which leads to life everlasting, the larger life for all.

Volume I:

"The Law of Moses"

Genesis

The Gift of Heaven

Evolution presupposes involution. Nothing can be evolved that has not in the first instance been involved. The oak tree is potentially concealed within the germ in the acorn, the bird within the germ plasm in the yolk of the egg. Involution and evolution express a process that is perpetually in operation from the only source adequate to account for it—the Infinite and Eternal Love and Wisdom of the Creator. "Subsistence is perpetual existence." (A. 775). Nature is a continual manifestation and representation of the Divine Life.

Man, however, occupies a unique place in creation. In the seed of man there is involved the distinctively human faculty of loving God and of believing in God. By the use of this faculty man reflects the image and likeness of his Maker so far as he becomes conscious of God's love in his heart, and expresses it in the daily life. Thus for a million years man has been slowly evolving in part what was potentially involved in the use of his will and understanding in active life. God has been spelling out the word Man all these years, while man has progressively been spelling out the word God.

A Latent Race Inheritance

The first eleven chapters of Genesis relate to prehistoric man. They tell in allegory, the language of that era, of the rise and fall of man in the early morning of the world.

Chapter 1. The story of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis covered a very long period of time, during which the human race advanced from a state of complete ignorance to the highest state of perfection without sin; from a state of chaos and darkness overshadowing the deep to the garden of Eden. The process of development covers three marked stages—the first three days, the second three days, and the seventh day ending with life in the garden of Eden. The first cycle covers the growth of primitive man in knowledge, the second cycle his growth in intelligence, and the third cycle his growth in wisdom.

In the first cycle man learned the nature and use of many things in his environment. The acquisition of this knowledge brought light into the mind. The more man learned the more he was conscious of his ignorance. God separated the light from the darkness. In humility man realised that what he knew was as nothing to that which he did not know. In his knowledge of spiritual and natural phenomena he found his greatest joy. This is heaven in the midst of the waters above and below. Man also learned how to live, how to apply knowledge to life,—his social life, his day's work, and his intercourse with God. These fruits of his labor marked a decided step in the making of man in the image and likeness of God.

The second cycle discloses the growth in intelligence, light on a higher plane, the plane of causation. The creation of the sun, moon and stars betokens a deeper enlightenment, especially in relation to God's love to man and man's duty to his fellowmen. Here again doubt and ignorance marked the limitations of man's understanding. Yet, when life's problems seemed insoluble and darkness reigned within, the memory of

past blessings and words of wisdom afforded comfort. Deeper reflection upon life's experiences opened the mind to new ways of living, which in turn enriched the tribal or communal life, revealing more fully the image and likeness of God, the Creator.

2. Thus, in the first place, the race in its infancy gained a knowledge of the facts of being, and how to live by them; and, in the second place, labored to get at the inner meaning of these facts, particularly the way in which all creation expressed the mind of the Creator. To see God in nature reveals the human in Him.

"O world as God has made it, all is beauty:
And knowing this is love, and love is duty."
- R. Browning

The beauty in the world conceals the love of God in the service of man. When pristine man beheld that beauty and made it a part of his own nature in the service of others he at last gained wisdom, which is the third cycle, and reaches the pinnacle in man's growth in that era. Man lived in God, and God in him. The peace of God—the Sabbath state—reigned within his soul. He lived in the garden of Eden, the garden of delight. His chief joy lay in the growth of wisdom. The tree of life was at the centre of things. It expressed man's growing perception of his dependence upon God for everything. It was the part of wisdom also to perceive the peril of trusting in self and the outward show of things. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also in the centre of the garden. Human happiness is measured by voluntary submission to the laws of heaven.

"How free we seem, how fettered fast we are.
I feel He laid the fetters: let them lie.
- R. Browning. "Andrea del Sarto."

Had man chosen to live within the law, the world might have been without sin today. But—man decided to remove the fetters laid by God for his good to discover the prison bars of hell.

How Evil Came

3. The fall of man follows the same course today as in the beginning. The experience never varies in its essential features. The tempter is the serpent, the embodiment of man's sensuous nature,—“the flesh,”—which is of the earth, earthy. The serpent appeals to the woman, that is, to the affectionate side of human nature. The temptation to trust in appearances is the beginning of evil in everyone. A child may be forbidden to do a certain thing that would be hurtful to itself, or to others. The desire to do it returns, with the subtle inducement to know from experience just what will happen—to have the eyes opened, and “be as a god, knowing good and evil!” The parent may be wrong! The child feels quite capable of judging right and wrong for itself! It can take care of itself! It will suffer no harm! The senses easily beguile and mislead. Whether a child sees the consequences or not, disobedience is a lapse in conduct, and self-justification completes the fall. When the woman ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, she gave to her husband, and he ate also. The heart takes the lead, and the head follows. The desire to taste and see is too strong to resist, and the mind too weak to admit wrongdoing. By sin man lost his innocence, and by excusing it he sought to conceal the shame of his nakedness. He thus automatically excluded himself from paradise. The Lord excludes no one from heaven. Providentially also sin automatically shuts out the light of heaven, and saves man from deeper sins. God set cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life.

Faith Alone

4. It is customary to think of Adam as an individual. Adam, however, is the composite name of many who belonged to the earliest people in the world, and who were the most highly developed in the spiritual life. In like manner Cain and Abel were not persons, but groups in the social body with very different natures. Those named Cain cultivated the mind. The growth of ideas of a practical order was their chief delight. Those named Abel tended the kindly affections of the heart. They fostered the spirit of brotherhood. Their service to others was acceptable to the Lord. But the service or offering of those who placed the emphasis on right thinking was not acceptable to God. Why? Because, when matters of belief are thought to be more important than brotherly love, difference of opinion leads to estrangement, enmity, and condemnation, which gives a death blow to goodwill. This decline and break in the communal life of the most ancient people in this world led to the development of heresies causing schisms in their social relationships. Right thinking had to be preserved, even though the best thinkers were ill disposed toward any who did not agree with them. A mark was placed on Cain that no man finding him should kill him. Intolerance does not invalidate the truth for others, altho it may make it less acceptable. The truth has saving power, even though it fall from the lips of a reprobate or hypocrite. "The scribes and the Pharisees, sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works: for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:2.)

The First Downfall

5. The genealogies which follow from Cain are ethnological or tribal, and not personal. From the names of them, their ages, and the few remarks about some of them, it is possible to get an idea of doctrines and heresies which characterized different groupings of men at the latter end of the first era of humanity on this planet. The decline that followed the long upward growth was probably rapid, and soon reached its consummation. "Except that the Lord had shortened these days, no flesh should be saved." (Matt. 24:22.)

The First New Church

6, 7. The decadence reached its nadir in the days of Noah. Again, Noah is not an individual, but a group of individuals, who stood out against the corruption of their times. "There were giants in those days. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Men were great and mighty in their own eyes. They thought of themselves as supermen. Their opinions and beliefs were infallible. When called in question, they became inflamed with passion, and turned to everything they had been taught or learned to prove that they were in the right. They even made use of Scripture to sustain their point. Nothing could be true that conflicted with their own ideas. Egotists are certain that they are right, always right, and that everyone who disagrees with them is wrong. They are so completely immersed in the flood of ideas, thoughts and reasons by which they confirm themselves, that any attempt to save them is hopeless. They extinguish life within themselves, the life they enjoyed in childhood of trust in parents, teachers and friends whom they respected and loved. They thought as they felt, and could not restrain their feelings. The Noachians were tempted to match dogmatism with dogmatism, egotism with still more egotism. They had their opinions too, convincing arguments and proof texts as well. Why not settle all disputes by a superior

power of persuasion? Because they saw the effect of it in breaking up homes and friendships. And so they shut themselves in, turning a deaf ear to the flood of unreason, keeping the single eye of faith open for light from above, and preserving the better feelings within. This is pictured in the ark, with the door in the side closed, its one window open above, and Noah and the animals kept safe within.

8-9:17. Loyalty to the truth, when the mind is deluged with selfish considerations, in time releases man from pessimism, renews hope, and, finally, finds a refuge for kindlier and purer thoughts from a right spirit within. Noah set the croaking raven free, never to return, and took the olive twig from the dove, which found a resting and nesting place on the earth, on being released the third time. This tells how conscience was formed in man. The rainbow is the sign that the flood will not be repeated. The race experience has made it possible for us today to take a detached view of every situation in life where our feelings warp our judgment, where passion rules our thoughts, and tests our faith in God. We have the power to see the hatefulness of the passion, and the lie in our thinking. New considerations also appear that sustain resistance. The sunshine breaks through, and the bow appears in the receding cloud. When we unreservedly admit that we are our brother's keeper, we see where we have been in the wrong, and are free to do right.

The Second Decline and Fall

9:18-29. The world entered a new era in the time of Noah. The first great era, called the Adamic, was characterised by the supremacy of God's love—love in simplicity and innocence—as it was in the infancy, or the kindergarten age, of humanity. The second great era, the Noachian, was the first school period, the first training in sociality or neighborliness. The allegory likens the age to Noah's vineyard. The clusters of grapes are symbols of the fruits of good teamwork. The esprit de corps is charged with sunshine, or goodwill. But, when the spirit of rivalry and hatred got under way, it led to excesses that ruined the teamwork. As the cry of Abel's blood presaged the end of the age of innocence, so the drunkenness of Noah portended the decline and fall of the age of sociality. When any nation or people imagines that it is superior to others, when it considers that it alone is civilised, and the rest barbarian, when it thus loses its head, talks loudly of its supereminence, and becomes entirely oblivious of its obligations to others, the shame of its nakedness is apparent. Ham saw Noah's humiliation only to publish it abroad. Shem and Japheth heard of it, but in charity cast a veil over the father's infirmities. It is the function of religion to excuse and not deride, to save and not condemn. We see the need of charity toward ourselves when we reckon our defects as against our attainments. The people of ancient times lived up to this ideal for a period, but latterly, like their predecessors, fell down on their job.

The Great Schism

10, 11. The last legend of the tower of Babel gives an epitome of the beginning and the end of the second dispensation—the childhood of the race. At the beginning of the Noachian age "the whole earth was of one lip, and their words were one." Everyone spoke the same language, or, rather, everyone understood his neighbor. Why? Because everyone lived to serve, and not to be served. The spirit of cooperation was predominant throughout society. But when the people journeyed from the east, descended to the plain below, and built a city and tower with burnt bricks for stone and inflammable bitumen for mortar, to

perpetuate their name, they ceased to understand each other, and were scattered over the face of the earth. When men turned their back on the Lord,—the rising sun—lapsed to a lower plane of living, and resorted to corrupt politics with its misrepresentation of facts and ardent party spirit, to make a name for themselves, they ceased to pull together, and understand each other. They may have spoken the same language, but could never see eye to eye, when their interests were opposed. They agreed only so far as self interest dictated. Rugged individualism is the antithesis of a cooperative commonwealth. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Thus ended the ancient regime about five thousand years ago, with the dawn of history.

Fact and Fable

Herodotus, the first historian, mingles myth with fact. Sometimes the myth contains moral teaching, as in the Promethean myth, when the meaning of the symbol is known. And sometimes myth and fact appear together, as in the story of the taking of Troy. In like manner the first chapters of Genesis are pure allegory, or myth, and record the inner experience of prehistoric man. But when we reach the name Heber it refers to a person as well as to a nation, the Hebrew nation, which took its name from its progenitor. And, finally, history proper begins with Abram, Nahor and Haran, descendants of Shem or of the Semitic race. Shem represents the inner circle, or leaders, of the Ancient Church, of which Japheth and his descendants represent the outer circle, or masses. Families and tribes in this second era of mankind grouped to form nations, build cities, and regulate their affairs for increased production and protection. Ham and his descendants represent the malcontents in the nation, who were held in subordination by the leaders and their supporters among the people. Noah condemned Canaan, son of Ham, to be the slave of Shem and Japheth.

The descendants of Ham are all of the same color. Among them are Mizraim (Egypt); Nimrod, who founded Babel; Asshur, who built Nineveh; Casluhim, from whom went forth the Philistines; and Canaan, who begat Heth, father of the Hittites, and the Jebusite, Amorite, Hivite, etc. These are the enemies who later held the children of Israel in bondage, opposed them in taking the promised land, were a thorn in the flesh while occupying it, and finally ousted ten of the tribes, and decimated the tribe of Judah! They are all "sons of Ham", whose name means "black" and "hot!" Black and hot characterise the evils which disintegrated the peoples of the Noachian era, so that they were unable to understand each other, and "were scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth," every man for himself. Meantime the human race became thoroughly externalised. The pristine state of innocence was gone, as also the later experience of sociality or neighborliness.

We have thus taken a glance at the first two stages in the development of the human race—the age of innocence, when men dwelt in tents; and the age of cooperation, when they lived in cities. What man gained and lost in both ages was banded down to posterity, and is now an unconscious factor in the evolution of character in the race and individual. What is here involved, however, does not enter the plane of conscious life, until the good involved within the historic period of the race has been restored to its place in life in fullness and purity, free from every perversion of it.

The Dawn of Consciousness

12-50. In turning now from allegory to real history, it is somewhat more difficult at first to recognize the thread of the inner meaning of the great drama in the Book of Life, The representation of the different characters from Abraham on may seem to be arbitrary or artificial. But when studied patiently in the light of experience, it becomes evident that the new meaning of the Scriptures is not put into them, but drawn out of them. It is like the study of nature and the discovery of its laws. The laws of physics have existed from the beginning. We know that our interpretation of them is correct when it works. And so with the laws of the spirit in the Word of God, which are mostly concealed within the letter. The laws have been in operation from the beginning, and as we endeavor to define them, we know that our interpretation of them as they are given in the Word is true, when it is coherent, and makes man wise unto salvation. The chief guiding Principle in interpreting the Scriptures rests upon the Lord's own statement that He fulfilled "the law and the Prophets." (Matt. 5:17; Lu. 24:27, 44.) The first words of the Gospel—"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ"—have a deeper meaning than appears in the letter. The genealogy there given descending from Abraham to Joseph summarises all that is implied in the Lord taking upon Him our nature. And the genealogy in Luke preceding the opening of his ministry, from Joseph to Abraham, and to Adam, and to God, epitomises the glorification of His Humanity, making it one with the Divine of which it was begotten through the conquest of sin and death. The Old Testament story presents the first part of his redemptive labors in extenso. What now follows in this running commentary takes up the theme on the plane of man's regeneration.

In Infancy, Childhood and Youth

To start with, it is well to bear in mind that the story of Abraham represents the inheritance from the infancy of the human race in infant life today, the story of Isaac the inheritance from the childhood of the race in childhood today, and the story of Jacob and his sons the inheritance from the youth of the human race in our youth today. The Book of Life is therefore our best guide in diagnosing inherited tendencies to good and evil in our children, and in training them to better advantage for the heavenly life. In Dickens' "Christmas Carol" the Spirit of Christmas Past revived Scrooge's memory of the joys he felt in his childhood, when he lived in heaven. All Scrooge needed was a change of heart to regain his lost paradise. The story closes happily with the achievement. In real life Mrs. Ballington Booth brought many a hardened criminal to his knees in tears from the recollection of his mother and his childhood. We do not, however, hear of the sequel. Everyone is open to the influences of heaven in childhood, but on a descending scale as the boy or girl come into closer touch with the world.

Heaven lies around us in our infancy.
- Wordsworth. "Ode to Immortality."

Minority shews three marked stages in the development of body, mind and soul. The milk teeth appear in the first period of growth in the body, the Permanent teeth in the second period, and changes attending puberty in the third period. In developing the mind the educator separates the nursery, or kindergarten, age from the early and the late scholastic periods. Each of these three periods for body and mind covers about six or seven years. The development of the soul has correspondingly marked periods of growth. But, whereas the growth of the body to its full stature, and of the mind to unlimited knowledge is upward, the growth of the soul to the age of responsibility is downward, or outward. Infants are in touch with the

highest heaven. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 18: 10.) Their innocence, their helplessness, and their complete dependence upon their parents appeals most deeply to all who love them. This innocence and simplicity the infants have from heaven. When they look to their parents for everything, and cling to them in time of danger, they have that feeling of trust from heaven. Angels are close at hand too when they play contentedly with their toys, and their imagination gives life to everything.

The age of innocence passes when children transfer their main interest to the school room and their companions. They learn to be sociable. They draw no sharp distinctions based on station, rank, wealth, color, creed, dress, or learning. They mix freely, and cooperate cheerfully with others in their groups. They respect their teachers, and ungrudgingly admire born leaders in their groups. They are open and frank in their manners and speech. In these and many other ways children acquire much of the spirit of heaven in social relationships. When they reach their teens, however, another spirit enters into the life of boys and girls. Adolescence is preeminently the age of morality. Young people come into closer touch with organised society, and take a vital interest in the morale of every person and institution. Nothing gives them greater pleasure than to discuss the problems of the hour in the Church or state. They are not as a rule so much concerned about the discussion of abstract doctrines of theology, as of Church or non-Church people. They make a hard and fast distinction between what appears to them as right or wrong. White is white, and black black. Any compromise with evil is a sign of weakness. When they adopt a cause, they are ready to sacrifice everything for it. It was "the boys" who went to the war, and in many instances misrepresented their age to get into the fight. Who fails to see the imprint of heaven on the human soul in adolescence here?

The innocence of infancy fades out of sight as the children begin to share their interests in the home with other children in the school, the town and country. They still love their parents and trust them, but differently. And they are no longer unconscious of wrong, or free from self-consciousness in their actions. According to the Biblical picture Abraham dies, and is buried in the land. Heaven is concealed within the child. In the same manner the joys of sociality become more and more restricted as social distinctions become more pronounced. Isaac dies and is buried in the land. Youth may feel strongly for moral justice, and sacrifice much for a cause, but, on entering the life of the world, generally drops to the level of the world, which reckons all values in dollars and cents, or social prestige, and regards self the equal of anyone, and the superior of many. Jacob dies and is buried in the land. The kingdom of heaven is within. The man is a man of the world.

From Centre to Circumference

12 Abram was born in Babylonia, in Ur of the Chaldees. He was brought up in the worst forms of idolatry, even the sacrifice of the eldest son to merit God's favor. In such an environment he could not represent anything but the corruption of religion by evil. Providentially he was brought into the land of Canaan and there promised again and again that his seed would inherit that favored land, which represents heaven. The lives of the patriarchs, therefore, represent the impression of the spirit of heaven in the heart of everyone before taking up life's responsibilities. The downward progression from innocence in infancy to worldliness in youth does not necessarily imply a degradation of character. The growth from inmost to outmost is perfectly normal. It is like the progression from end, which is inmost and primary, through cause, which is secondary, or instrumental, to effect, which conceals within both the end and the cause.

Even so the heaven of innocence, or love to God is the inmost motive in life; the heaven of sociality is the means of expressing that love in neighborliness; and the heaven of practical morality is the plane of expression in action. All three are implied in the Lord's words: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3.) With the right motive—God's love—everything will follow in the sequence to its permanent expression in right conduct. The motive must come first, find the way to make itself known, and finally get the word or the deed to complete the everlasting cycle, to be repeated with infinite variation. It is like the invariable cycle from seed to tree, and then to fruit, with the new seeds in it in fulfilment of the order of creation.

Life a Perpetual Spiral

13. The process of life from inmost, to outmost, from centre to circumference, and back again to the centre, is basic throughout nature. The growth of man from the beginning might have been orderly and natural had not man sinned. As a matter of fact, however, sin is here, and the tendency to sin is in the seed of man since the fall, as well as the tendency to good. The first appearance of evil when the child desires to have its own way contrary to the parents' wishes may seem to be of little importance, or even any attention at all. But, the appearance is frightfully deceptive. The offence may be insignificant; but, what is within and behind it? The name Lot, Abram's nephew, means "concealed," or "covered over." Lot represents the inherited tendencies to evil in the flesh. The evil content hidden within a simple offence is beyond estimate. Let any child have its own way, and in time it may rule the home, and later come to be a serious problem to the child itself, and to the community in which it lives. Most of our criminals were on their way to the penitentiary long before they reached their teens. Lot quarrels with Abram. Evil is always at odds with good. It is better that Abram and Lot should separate. Abram stays on the mountain top. His name means significantly "father of height." Lot chooses the valley where are Sodom and Gomorrah. A man is known by the company he keeps. The separation of Lot gives Abram an opportunity to grow in the land in peace. The heavenly life in infancy grows as the tendencies to evil are kept in quiescence. Good parents wisely exercise tact to avoid awakening these tendencies, or forcing the issue between them and the children unnecessarily. Give heaven a chance to grow in them. The child that grows up in a quarrelsome home is handicapped. The child that is not wanted is equally handicapped. We cannot give the children too much love, or do overmuch for them, or with them. Children are never spoiled by loving, or a bountiful mothering. The spoiling comes only when defects in character come to the surface and are treated lightly, or overlooked, or regarded as cute.

Life's First Conflicts

4. Every child needs correction, or punishment, when in the wrong. Unquestionably the child is good by nature, and lives in sunshine under normal conditions. But, all children break the rules laid down for them, and sometimes find it very hard to yield obedience. The soul's conflicts in minority are summarised in the four kings from the east with the five kings in the valley of Siddim, full of bituminous pits. The four kings represent the ideas children conceive about right and wrong from what they have been taught. At first they do not see anything wrong in their conduct. But, when they sense the real issue between them and their parents, a real conflict takes place within. The disapproval or rebuke of parents cuts them to the quick. They see also that they are not happy when in a passion or perverse. They must do something

about it. In their eagerness to regain the affection and confidence of parents they are apt to condemn overmuch. Disapproval or restraint does not always imply the condemnation of the children's pleasures, but of indulging in them to excess. Good is mixed with evil, and must not be sacrificed with it, but saved through moderation, or the separation of any evil associated with any legitimate pleasure. When the four kings took Lot after sacking Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram pursued, and saved "his brother and his goods" from destruction. The good in human nature must not perish with the bad. A child's judgment is superficial, and often goes to extremes. A saner, a deeper, a more conservative judgment is needed to redeem man.

The Birth of the Critical Faculty

15, 16. Abram represents the love of God implanted in the innocent heart of the infant, through its love of the parents and its perfect trust in them. The love of parents comes naturally almost at birth to the child from the Lord. But obedience to parents comes later through instruction. At first the infant obeys out of love for the parents, or from a sense of duty, but not because the infant sees that it is right to do so. As it grows older it begins to think for itself and to question the parents' commands, or even disobey them. Who has not heard a child of five or six years of age give reasons for taking its own way? This is the inception of the faculty of reason, but reason used to justify disobedience. It is represented in the birth of Ishmael, the wild-ass man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him. Willfulness demands justification, and finds the best reasons available at the time. This is not the rightful heir of Abram. A pure love of the parents requires reasoning that upholds the parents' will as against the child's will.

17. Every child can argue for the parents' point of view just as well as it can argue for having its own way. It too often decides to take the line of least resistance in self-indulgence. And when it acquires a bad habit, and excuses it, the chances seem to be against reversing its judgment and acknowledging that it is in the wrong. That is human nature. Whenever the child, however, out of love for father and mother sees that they are right, and determines to reverse its ways, it is thenceforth guided by conscience—the dictate of reason. The motive which corrects the child's judgment is the unselfish love of parents, which is to the child the love of God. This all important point is represented by the change in the names of Abram and Sarai on promise of the birth of Isaac. The insertion of the letter h, the distinctive letter in the Divine Name, Jehovah, and in the Hebrew verb "to be", is highly significant. The aspirate h is the symbol of the breath of life, and marks the point when the child decides for the right from unselfish love. That love charges it with life from God. It is rational truth.

The Birth of Reason

18-22. The birth of Isaac represents the birth of reason from unselfish love, the only source of reason that is ordained to be the instrument to save man from sin. This new faculty in man must save everything that can be saved in a corrupt world. If there are even ten righteous persons in Sodom it would not be destroyed. Although Sodom and Gomorrah could not be saved, yet Lot must not perish with them. Unselfish love desires to save everyone. The evil that turns from the light, however, compasses its own end. The Lord provides that all the good mixed up with it shall be withdrawn from it. And when that is

being effected there must be no misgivings, no hankering after the old life. "Remember Lot's wife." The child when first it sees wrong in itself, and determines to overcome it, is quite unconscious of the source and the far reaching effect of its decision, and the momentous changes wrought in its character. For the first time the child has met evil in itself destructive of its love of father and mother. The child sees that the love of parents ends if it persists in having its own way, and justifies it. To prove worthy of the parents' love self-justification must be completely banned—the wild-ass-man Ishmael must leave the home, that Isaac alone may take his place there. And life must henceforth be dedicated to the sole object of obeying a conscience motivated by unselfish love and approved by sound reason. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac discloses the depth of this experience in childhood, and in later life too. The dictate of conscience in later regeneration is only the, flowering of the seed sown in childhood.

The Growth of Reason and Conscience

21-25. In the sanctum of the home the infant imbibes deeply the love of its parents. That love is put to the test when the child's will conflicts with the parents' will. If that love prevails the child will give good reasons for taking the parents' way in preference to its own. In this way the faculty of reason is conceived and born in infancy. Tender and delicate to start with it must be carefully protected and encouraged to become the strong habit of straight thinking so greatly needed later in a world notoriously crooked in its thinking. The child enters the great world without when it goes to school, and must set up its own standard of living. The child may object to play with another particular child. Why? Where is the wrong, and how can it be set right? Or, the child may fail to cooperate in class work. It may break the rules, or be disorderly, quarrelsome, dishonest, or unfair. In the six or seven years of school life there is hardly a day when the child's attention is not directed to questions affecting its adjustment to others in group activities. At the start the child is easily led. It respects its teachers, and lends an open ear to advice. But gradually it questions adult authority, and only obeys if shown good reason. It will be guided somewhat by the conduct of other children in its group, but will modify its behavior in line with its own thought about right and wrong. In building up a standard of behavior—conscience—the love of home plays a large part. Abraham finds a wife for Isaac from among his own people. The right reason for right action is the truth as God gives the child to see it; and God to the child is in its untainted admiration of its parents. From this source and stock comes the affection in the child for the right, which affection is represented by Rebekah. Abraham's servant met her on her way to draw water from the well, and Isaac met her on his way from the well. A well represents the fountain of living waters, or truth, which, for the Christian, is the Word of God. Few realise the preeminent importance of the Sacred Scriptures in the home and Sunday School in forming rationality in the child. Other factors of course enter into the formation and growth of a true conscience. Abraham's servant, the camels, the present to Rebekah, etc., all enter into the picture. Many varied elements contribute to every boy or girl's decisions in learning to cooperate with those in the home, or in the school, or on the street, or to stand up for the right. The child's relation to the parents and to God gradually changes. Abraham married again, and had other children. The child also makes many decisions that are selfish and antisocial. It is at times difficult to manage, stubborn and unreasonable. It won't work, it spoils teamwork. Ishmael, the wild-ass-man, had twelve sons, princes, who built towers and castles.

23-25. The Lord, however, works in mysterious ways to give every boy and girl a sense of duty to others that fits them for superior teamwork in the world. Undoubtedly the innocence—the love of parents—implanted in infancy plays an important part in the child's later growth. Abraham and Sarah are buried in the land. This means resurrection. What they represented in the infant's life lives in the growth of the good side in the child and youth.

A Fountain of Living Water

26. Our duty to our children, however, is to give them a sound knowledge of the Bible, for this Book of Life teaches how the loves of self and gain—the dust of the earth—close the Word itself, which is the fountain of all truth, and how the Lord opened those truths which were with the ancients by keeping the law and the prophets in every jot and tittle. The Philistines stopped up the wells digged by Abraham's servants, but Isaac opened them again. The spirit of the world is too strong to admit of our teaching the children the deeper significance of the Scriptures, which even we ourselves understand very imperfectly. The Philistines contested Isaac's right to the first wells dug by his servants, and forced him to relinquish them. But when he opened the third well, the contest ended, and the Philistines entered into a covenant with Isaac at Beersheba, "the well of the oath." So when the living truth is drawn from the letter of the Word, differences in matters of interpretation may separate us, but all affirm the one essential of religion to keep the commandment that we love one another as the Lord hath loved us. The life of Isaac enforces the importance of teaching our children the stories in the Bible, for these stories all illustrate the meaning of the law, and the consequences for good or ill that follow the obedience or disobedience of it. There can be no greater help to children in forming their concept of right and wrong,—the conscience which will determine the course of their spiritual life thereafter. The doctrine of faith signified by "Beersheba is the very literal sense of the Word, for the Word is doctrine itself. And he who reads to be wise, that is, to do good and understand the truth, is instructed according to his end and affection; for unknown to him the Lord flows in and enlightens his mind, and where he is at a loss, gives understanding from other passages." (A. 3436.) The whole Word in the literal sense teaches only one doctrine—the doctrine of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor. "The Divine is in the literal sense of the Word, because therein is the Lord's kingdom in the earths." (A. 3451.) And so the church would be like the Lord's kingdom in the heavens if all had charity. The meaning of charity, or, the law of love, is crystallised in the minds of children every day while they are learning the literal sense of the Word. We do our best when we make the story clear and definite for the child. The Lord does the rest when He effects a connection between the content of the teaching in the letter with the thoughts of the child in the issues arising daily in its home and school life. We feed the children: the Lord takes care of the processes of assimilation.

The Birth of Independence

27. Infants bask in the sunshine of God's love in the innocent love of their parents and infant companions. From this love of God comes the conscious love of the neighbor in the child's school life. With the approach of adolescence the boy and girl evidence an increasing impatience with control in the home or school. The urge for independence and self-expression is irrepressible, and with it comes a conflict between the will and the understanding, or the heart and the head, in meeting the problem of life. Twins struggled in the womb of Rebekah. Esau was the firstborn. The second was named Jacob, ("heel-

catcher"), because he took hold of his brother's heel. Jacob supplanted Esau twice: he took his birthright and his father's blessing. The two elements that constitute man are life and doctrine. Of these two life, or good, comes first, and doctrine, or truth, second. But, youth inverts this order, and makes more of doctrine than of life, or gives precedence to the head over the heart. This is to be expected. Youth is not yet of age, or out of school. In the development of character for heaven an infant is almost all heart, receptive of the Divine Love, with little or no understanding of its obligations to others. Later, as a child it is open to the love of other children, and readily learns the meaning of the law requiring equal consideration for them in work and play. Head and heart play about an equal part in its life. In youth, however, the head takes the lead: the love of the neighbor is subordinate to self-interest. Young people are strongly opinionative, self-willed and independent. They narrow down their friendships to a chosen few: all others are regarded as acquaintances or strangers. With sex maturity, too, the relationship of boys and girls is somewhat different. Youth centres its interest now in preparing for life's responsibilities. It takes its first serious view of the real world it is about to enter in the struggle for existence.

The Mess of Pottage

The problem of evil and the question of a vocation in life are the two practical issues that confront every youth. The problem of evil is the greater, and character takes form in the attempt to solve it. The heart, already touched with the love of God and the love of the neighbor, is shocked by the disorder in the world. Youth feels impelled to do something for decency, justice and freedom. Youth may also be painfully conscious of bad habits in self that demand attention and rectification. Youth is susceptible to the appeal of religion, because it offers a way out. But which religion? Which reform? Youth is partial to the religion and politics of the parents. But it finds these called in question. The farther afield youth goes, the greater the variety of opinion. A chaotic mass of ideas confronts the youth. What shall he believe? To be of any service to others he must make his own choice. Whatever he takes to satisfy his hunger for righteousness is only an ideal. Youth mistakes it for the real. Youth is strong in the belief that in the adoption of his chosen religion, his chosen ideal, is the solution of the problem. Looked at from the inside youth has sold its birthright for a mess of pottage. The remedy is only a theory, only an abstract ideal. "Your sons and your daughters prophesy, your young men see visions! (Joel 2:28.) Youth, lacking experience, is sure that all the world needs is simply an ideal, and is willing to stake its life to convert the world to that ideal. The great war was "a war to end war! " "A war to make the world safe for democracy!" The irony of fate! The price of utopianism!

A Great Illusion

The cure of human ills is never in the prescription, which substitutes the form for the substance, or truth for good. This inversion of the true order of things is inseparable from youth. Fortunately it has its good side. It leads to an intensive study of the facts of experience to prove the truth of the ideal, and its redemptive power. But youth must learn the weakness of its position. Youth cannot wholly convince one's better reason of the invincibility of the pure ideal. Blind Isaac admits that Jacob's bands are the hands of Esau, but protests that "the voice is the voice of Jacob." An unselfish purpose gives power to the ideal, but only so far as the evil destructive of it is removed. Youth thinks otherwise, and youth must have its way. Jacob received the blessing intended for Esau: Jacob should be lord over the nations, and his

mother's sons should bow down to, him. When Esau disillusioned Isaac there seemed to be no blessing left. How wonderful the words that came at the last! "By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." Isaac confirmed his blessing to Jacob, but prophesied the reversal of it as the goal of life. Immaturity in youth implies a superficial judgment—the transcendence of faith over love. But the wisdom of experience is reached through the supremacy of love over faith. The head may be right, the ideal right, but nothing is right, till the heart is right with God. "When thou shalt have dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

28. Youth is not responsible for overemphasising the importance of faith over love, for taking the outside for the inside, the form for substance. It is a normal stage of growth. Jacob has his brother's birthright and his father's blessing. But, the temporary inversion of the true order of things must be set straight. Maturity will correct the appearance by right thinking, and put all theories to the test in life's crucible. This is the essential meaning of Jacob's dream. The angels ascend and descend upon the ladder, and the Lord over all then promises the restoration of the land to Jacob's posterity. The ladder is the Word of God as the stepping-stone to higher thoughts about God and man's responsibility to God. To raise life up to that level, however, the thoughts must descend to the level of the daily life. Knowledge like wealth carries a responsibility with it. Great wealth is a curse unless used to the greater good of society. In an orderly society "each receives his own good from the common good, and in proportion to his love of the common good." (C. 127.) How can this dream be materialised? Theory must be translated into action, the vision translated into new and deeper expressions of love,—God's love in man's life. This "is the house of God; this the gate of heaven." "Heaven is a kingdom of uses." (A. 997.) Youth must catch the vision and never lose sight of it.

The Spiritual Life

29, 30. Youth is incurably religious, seeking the ideal in the spiritual life, as in the moral and civil life of the world. all the spiritual life is just the unselfish motive, or God- given motive, in moral and civil life. This has its technique too. The rational interpretation of God's Word unfolds the inner working of the soul back of everything man thinks or does for good in the world. Youth looks to the Church to explain revelation and help it to understand the nature of God and the spiritual life. The Church exists to fill this need. Jacob reached the high land in Syria at Haran and found a well there with three flocks waiting to be watered. The well again pictures God's Word as the source of the water of life; and the flocks are the people in the upper, middle and lower ranks in society seeking instruction in the way of life.

Its Inner and Outer Aspects

Jacob met Rachel at the well, rolled back the stone from the mouth of it, and watered the flock. Rachel represents the affection of internal truth, and Leah, her elder sister, the affection of external truth. The Church teaches external or general truths for the uninitiated, and internal truths for advanced students.

Everyone learns at first that he must love his neighbor as himself, but later asks the question who the neighbor is. This requires deeper study and experience to answer. The answer is the real objective of every Bible student, the simple and the wise alike. Jacob loved Rachel—the affection of interior truth—the moment he saw her at the well. Youth desires to know the inner side of life, but discovers, to its disappointment, that it has only touched the surface, when it imagined it had grasped the inner significance of the truth. The study of medicine offers an analogy. A medical Student aims to learn the practice of medicine. He may think he knows the inside of his subject even before he graduates. It takes experience to prove that he has only learned the theory, and very imperfectly at best. After working seven years for Rachel Jacob had to accept Leah, the weak-eyed daughter, and work seven years more for Rachel, beautiful in form and handsome. Study alone, even under the guidance of a capable teacher, will not define neighborly love in its various degrees otherwise than academically, yielding only a weak understanding of one's duty to the neighbor, because the application differs in every life, and in ever varying circumstances. History in reality never repeats itself. It needs experience to see the symmetry and beauty of the inner teachings of the Word to each life, with its own background and foreground different from those of any other person. When youth makes this its quest it acquires new concepts of life's attribute-, in the keeping of the law, or of the doctrines of the Church.

The Truths by Which Men Live

The sons of Jacob represent all the truths by which men live. With even an indifferent religious education most youths form some idea of the meaning of faith, obedience, unity and praise. The first four sons of Leah were Reuben, (meaning sight), Simeon (hearing), Levi (conjunction), and Judah (praise). To these may be added concepts of judgment and mercy (Dan), temptations (Naphtali), good works (Gad), eternal happiness (Asher), mutual love (Issachar). and marital love (Zebulun). All these concepts are formed through a simple or elementary knowledge of the Bible and the world. They are sons of Leah and the handmaids. As yet Rachel is barren. The concepts born of an understanding of the inner meaning of the Scriptures have as yet to come.

The Birth of the Christ-Ideas

30. Every Christian child knows that Jesus Christ was born to Save his people from their sins. It has this thought enshrined in tender memories every year at Christmastide. The child, however, has little or no conception of what it means. Not until Youth senses the love of God in coming into the World to lead His erring children back into the fold again, does it conceive this truth as intimately connected with its inner life. Joseph, the savior of his brethren, represents this vital doctrine of the Lord as the Savior of mankind.

When this becomes a live truth in the heart of young people it changes their whole viewpoint in life. Everything learned previously takes on a new and deeper meaning. And every new experience or activity has a different quality and value. Life grows richer. Many false ideas and human failings still mingle with the good in youth. Our young people may be impetuous, proud, ambitious, wasteful, niggardly, intemperate, or narrow- minded. But when vices such as these lean to virtue's side, they do not damn character like hatred, contempt or impurity. The blemishes can be removed in time. The true and the false also are mingled in every Youth. The consciousness of this mixture of good and bad in youth through the

advent of the teaching of religion, and particularly of God's love in Christ, is a sign of spiritual growth. But Youth's consciousness of its unworthiness of such consideration and mercy from the Lord is the surest proof of religion in the heart. Jacob not only increased his possessions in speckled and spotted flocks, but also in black lambs. Black lambs! Youth disowns the pretence of innocence. Youth hates shame or hypocrisy.

A New Motive

31. Thus children learn the Bible stories and form elementary ideas of the virtues and vices from them, the simple meaning of the commandments, or doctrine of life. They feel the spirit of Christmas when celebrating the birth of the Savior, but without realising its meaning. They live on the same plane as the Gentiles, until the gospel story comes to have a meaning for them. A new motive is then set free that is destined to change character. Joseph is born in Haran, and Jacob must return to the promised land. The new motive starts a conflict within that calls for an understanding. Gentile and Christian must part. Neither may despise the good in the other, except to his own hurt. Laban and Jacob enter into a covenant at Mizpah: "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent from one another."

32. The concept of the saving grace of the Lord now leads youth to the acknowledgment of the supremacy of good over truth, or of love over faith. Youth sees at times the folly of self-confidence. Youth acknowledges vividly on occasion that it knows nothing, and has everything to learn. Youth realises that to know what is right and not to practice it makes for hypocrisy and spiritual snobbery. Youth does not learn this either without an ache or pain. Jacob wrestled with the angel, but held his ground and received a new name, Israel, for "as a prince he gained power with God and man, and prevailed."

33. Therefore, when Jacob met Esau, he was a changed man. He bowed before him to the ground seven times, and addressed him as "my lord." Youth is learning at last that "good is what teaches and leads, truth is what is taught and led." (A. 4844.) Learning is of value only so far as it leads to better living. Youth at last looks at the ideal from the right angle. The religious education of youth is mostly intellectual, the result of teaching, or study. But when- it reaches the point of recognizing, through a touch of experience, the priority of love, the doctrines of the Church are vitalised, and give youth, its first- real foothold in understanding the nature of the heavenly life. Jacob entered the promised land, and "bought 'the piece of ground on which he pitched his tent, from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father. And he erected there an altar, and called it God, the God of Israel."

The Acknowledgment of the Truth

34. Here begins youth's first contact with the life of religion. The Rite of Confirmation is the symbol of it, though the two may not happen at the same point of time. Youth sees the meaning of life and openly declares its intention of being faithful henceforward to the Lord. Sometimes this experience, commonly called conversion, is attended by bigotry and fanaticism. The convert overemphasises the importance of faith, and hates, or anathematizes, all who think differently, though they may be well disposed, and even open to conviction, especially in teaching regarding clean living. When it is remembered that "the man

who hates kills every moment, this being in his will and in the delight of his life," (A. 3440) it may help in seeing the meaning of the revolting massacre of the Shechemites for the ravishment of Dinah, Jacob's only daughter.

The Meaning of Life

5. Every lapse in Christian living leads to repentance and reconsecration to life's task. Jacob calls upon the members of his household to get rid of their strange gods, and proceed to Bethel—"the house of God"—for worship. There the Lord confirmed the change of name to Israel and the gift of the promised land to his seed. It is all very significant. Soon after the first conflicts with evil the convert sees the enormity of the task before him, and feels profoundly the apparent hopelessness of it. Human nature cannot be changed! The world defies anyone to alter it for the better! Youth looks in despair for the system that will Work in overcoming evil, and how to put it into operation. Every art has its own technique. Where is the technique of the art of Christian living? Out of youth's desperation comes the plain simple concept in the words, "If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:14.) The saving power of the Lord is in the truth that brings evil into the light, to condemn it, and get rid of it. It is easy to see the technique of salvation in relation to other people, but hard to apply it to self. Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin. She named him Benoni, "Son of my sorrow," but "his father called him Benjamin," which means "Son of my right hand," the power of truth energised by love. (John 3:16, 17.) Joseph and Benjamin are inseparable. Rachel named her firstborn Joseph, and said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." The love of saving is impotent without the truth to give it its objective. The fact also that Benjamin was born at Bethlehem, where "the Word became flesh," is highly significant. "For thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matt. 2:6.) "The image vanishes when the Form Itself appears." (A. 4904.)

This completes the twelve "sons of Israel" whose descendants now become the central figure in God's Word to the last. The conception and birth of the truths by which we live have as their background all the states through which we have passed in infancy and childhood. What now follows presents the development and unfolding of the content of these truths under pressure of life's trials. The captivity of the ten foreshadows the final test of reason, and the captivity of Judah the final test of the will that yields the concept of the Son of God to restore every truth that has been under doubt or denial. This is the law, the prophets and the Gospel.

And Jacob came unto his father Isaac in Hebron, and he and Esau buried their father after his death. Burial implies resurrection, the reawakening of reason to new conditions in the regenerate life.

36. In further preparation for this new development the good in the natural man is coordinated with the elements in character now about to come into the foreground. How little we know about the way in which the strongest parts in man are marshalled to restore health in a sick body. No more do we see or understand the part played by the good in obscure members of the community in time of recovery from a disaster or accident. So with this strange enumeration of "the generation of Esau, who is Edom." Its significance in the context is very remote, but reminds us of the complexity of the most common phenomenon known to us—life—and how little we really know about it.

The Central Truth in Christianity

37. We now attempt to follow the inner experience of youth from its first fresh contact with the life of religion to the time of its full contact with the world in which it has to live. Here follows the journey from Canaan to Egypt. "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country." (Lu. 15:13.) We generally appreciate home better after having been away from it for a time. Contrasts give pungency to life. The Divine Love is absolute reality, the central power in the universe. That Love manifested in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central truth in Christianity. The Bible stories prophetic of the Lord's Advent present the theme in varied light. Jacob gave his favorite child a coat of many colors. Youth enthusiastically recognises the superlative beauty in the Lord's self-sacrificing, life. It is, however, so far beyond human attainment, that it loses its practical value as youth approaches what it is pleased to call real life. Youth questions the preeminence of sacrificial love in a hard-boiled world. Youth places little value on self-sacrificing love when self-interest is at stake. The brethren sold Joseph for a few paltry pieces of silver. Youth repudiates the supremacy of love and violates the gospel teaching when self-interest prevails and is justified. The brethren display the blood-stained coat to Jacob to account for Joseph's absence.

38. The picture presents the state of the world today. Christendom recognises the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior, as the central figure in its religion. The supremacy of the Lord, however, is denied in the polity of both Church and State. The Church is dominated by the world. Joseph is down in Egypt. The sad state of the Church "lapsed into falsity, and evil, and idolatry (A. 4815) is depicted in the connection of Judah with Shua and Tamar and the sons born of them, the progenitors of the tribe. of Judah. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon it. What is for the most part concealed in the origin here appears in its later developments. In passing it may be worth noting that Judah represents. the depraved state of the Church when he persuaded his brothers to sell Joseph. It was also Judas who sold his Master for a few pence. Judah paid "double for all his sins" (Isa. 40:2) in the Babylonian captivity, and Judas expiated his crime in the sacrifice of his life.

The World Without Christ

39. Joseph prospered in the house of Potiphar, and was placed in. charge of it. Then followed his temptation from Potiphar's wife, and his incarceration on false charges. This represents the first preparation for the restoration of the Church. It has a remarkable fulfillment in the quiet work done within the last century in restoring all the records of past civilisations, and furnishing a more complete knowledge of them. The Church is tempted to rest its case with the authentication of the letter of the Sacred Scriptures and bow to the authority of revelation, and the literal interpretation of it, which suppresses the "spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 19:10.)

40. The world suffers from a lack of charity. Through its sufferings it must first learn that differences of opinion in others should be tolerated or even encouraged; only a lack of charity deserves condemnation, in accord with the letter of the Word. The butler will be restored to his former place as the servant of Pharaoh, and the baker hanged.

41. Through suffering also the Church must learn that the good stored up in man in childhood is never lost, and is the divinely appointed means of saving the world. Pharaoh has his; dreams, but Joseph is needed to interpret them. The Lord opens the Scriptures and reveals his merciful provision for the salvation of his people.

"The Bread of Life"

42. God's Word is -by far the best seller in the market today,_ And there are not lacking other symptoms: of a great hunger and thirst for righteousness in the world, a hunger for the teachings of religion—the bread of life. The famine is felt in the land. The disrupted Church senses the needs of the people, and is eager to supply it. The brethren, the shepherds of Israel, go down into; Egypt for food. Joseph opens the storehouse and supplies their needs without cost. As yet they do not know him.

43. Before the Church can serve the people it must become more united. The bread of life can only be dispensed to the humble and well-disposed. When the brethren came before Joseph the first time they bowed in formal acknowledgment of his sovereignty. The second time they bowed even to the ground. The third time they: prostrated themselves before him. The Church must be humbled. The conceit in knowledge, with the perpetual struggle for uniformity in matters of doctrine, must die, and a brotherhood be established in the Church. Joseph charged his brethren with being spies come to see the nakedness of the land. They protested that they were brethren, members of the true Church, seeking only the good of others. Yet one was lacking in the brotherhood, even Benjamin. This is admitted without realising its significance.

Israel is unwilling to let the brethren take Benjamin with them to Egypt. We are not prepared to exercise brotherly love freely. Yet Joseph may not be approached again without Benjamin. Without practicing loving mercy toward one another, we can never behold the loving mercy of the Lord. Why should bitter feelings engendered by controversies and dissensions in the Church prevail? Why cannot we get rid of them, and have the Lord's presence among us as a united Church? Practical Christianity demands it. We must have this food, or perish.

The Catholicity of Scripture

44. Judah's pledge to give his life for Benjamin procures the assent of Israel. They who have solely the good of the Church at heart can be trusted to find the means of reconciliation. But greater sacrifice is called for to effect it. Joseph' divining cup was found in Benjamin's sack, endangering his freedom. We take merit to ourselves for the practical lessons of Christianity drawn from revelation. We must learn to accept these lessons and live according to them, without any thought of reward. We have no monopoly of the truth. Christian charity demands that we recognise every man who lives, according to his faith as our neighbor. "This is my brother. I see that he worships the Lord and is a good man." (A. 2385.)

45-47. Charity—Benjamin—is the only medium, that can reveal the Lord—Joseph,—and restore unity in the Church. It is prophetic. Some day the spirit that breeds heresies in the Church will be dissipated, and one Church arise out of many, or unity prevail in the midst of diversity. Jacob, and the brethren, and their children, and their flocks and herds all went down into Egypt, and settled in the land of Goshen. The Church is learning that the points on which they agree are more important than those on which they differ.

A New Will and Understanding

48. The beginning of the end approaches. Jacob is about to die. Joseph brings his two boys and places them before Jacob so that in blessing them his right hand would be placed on the head of Manasseh, the firstborn, and his left on Ephraim the second-born. But Jacob crossed his bands so that the right was on Ephraim and the left on Manasseh. Joseph protested. But Jacob said that it was intentional, and should remain so. The boys born of an Egyptian mother represent the new will and the new understanding in the natural man. When man is born again he acquires the will to do right as God gives him to see right. If he has not the will to believe, he cannot even entertain the truth. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." (Pope, "Essay on Man.") Good is prior and, superior, truth secondary and subordinate. Nevertheless, the natural man still insists on placing truth first, and good second. He is convinced that he must learn the truth first, and then practice it. That is the appearance, and it is useless to quarrel over it. Everyone makes more of the truth *Per se*, than of good until he has reduced it to practice. It is the same in general in Politics as in religion. A man's political belief is supreme, and unassailable, although it is still theoretical, very uncertain what it means in practical terms, and wholly unproved. Truth comes first, good second. It has its place—an educational value, which may not be disregarded. But, without God's love in the heart leading, life's problem is insoluble. Joseph's viewpoint is from within, Jacob's from without.

Potency of the Truths of Faith

49. The interest and thought given to practical Christian living in the new-born man are destined to take a most important place in the regeneration of the individual and the Community. Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh as members of his family. And when the tribes were settled in the promised land Ephraim had a place in the very heart of it, and Manasseh had not only a lot next to Ephraim's, but also a lot on the farther side of Jordan. Jacob then gave his last will in words to each of his children. His benediction stresses the strong or weak points in their character, with warning, or encouragement, for future guidance. Attention is drawn to one only which is of special importance. To Judah he said: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, or a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Judah means "praise," the outpouring of love. Shiloh means "peace," and, as used here personally, refers to the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." (Isa. 9:7.) In Jacob's benison and Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled in the life of the Lord there surely could not be any stronger attestation of the sovereignty of love. The line of descent from Judah through David to Jesus is unbroken. "As far as truth is leader, so far good is obscured; but as far as good is a leader, so far truth shines in its light." (A. 2407.)

50. Jacob died and was buried with Abraham and Isaac in the cave of Machpelah. Burial signifies resurrection. Everything good in man lies deeply hidden behind and beneath his character. Everything that he has received from above in the past exists in the present, and makes up his character, though most of it may be wholly forgotten. "The kingdom of heaven is within you." (Lu. 17:21.) The Lord said this to the Pharisees. They did not know it, except possibly in theory. For He said unto them, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Matt. 23:13.)

Belief in the Savior a Memory

When the father died the brethren feared that Joseph would get even with them for their mean treatment of him. Contrary to the general rule, Joseph not only represented, but also exemplified the Savior's love. "You meant to do me evil," he said, "but God meant good to come out of it, as is happening today, to save much people alive."

Would that this spirit had lived in the brethren and their children! Would that this spirit lived in us when first we entered the world to make a living in it. Joseph died, but was not buried. His body was placed in a sarcophagus, and guarded for about two hundred years, and then taken out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and finally buried in the land as Joseph requested. The unburied body in Egypt meant that the belief in the Lord as the Savior, with all the tender associations connected with it in youth had become a dead memory; or possibly, at best, or at worst, an empty profession of faith.

Youth is at the crossroads. The garden of Eden is behind, and the world with all its allurements ahead. Youth faces a broad and easy road to the left, and a narrow and straight road to the right. Which shall it be?

Exodus

The Love of Obedience

"In the Church it is indeed known that man must be born again, or be regenerated, to enter the kingdom of God. But what it is to be born again is known only to few, because few know what good and evil are, and this because they do not know what charity toward the neighbor is. If they knew this, they would also know what good is, and from good what evil is; for everything is good which comes from genuine charity toward the neighbor. But no one can be in this good from himself, because it is the celestial itself which flows in from the Lord. This celestial flows in continually, but evils and falsities stand in the way of its being received; and therefore for its reception it is necessary for man to remove evils, and as far as he is able falsities also, and thus dispose himself to receive the influx. When evils have been removed the man receives the influx; he at the same time receives a new will and a new understanding; and from the new will he feels delight in doing good to the neighbor from no selfish end, and from the new understanding he perceives delight in learning what is good and true for its own sake, and for the sake of the life. But the regeneration through which come the new understanding and the new will is not accomplished in a moment, but goes on from earliest infancy even to the close of life, and afterward in the other life to eternity, and thus by Divine means, innumerable and unspeakable; for man of himself is nothing but evil, which continually exhales from a furnace, and continually endeavors to extinguish the nascent good. The removal of such evil, and the inrooting of good in its place, cannot be effected short of the whole course of life, and through Divine means numberless and unspeakable. Of these means scarcely any are known at the present day, for the reason that man does not suffer himself to be regenerated, nor does he believe regeneration to be anything, because he does not believe in a life after death. The process of regeneration, which includes unspeakable things, makes up the main part of angelic wisdom, and is of such a nature that it cannot be fully exhausted by any angel to eternity." (A. 5354.)

The four books of Moses which follow help to understand the processes of reformation in a measure. They set forth the giving of the law and the elaboration of it. Throughout this period the understanding comes first and the will second. All five books of the law relate to the education of the mind first. They provide the vision of the angels ascending the heavenly ladder—the Son of man—the vision of the possibilities of life. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" (R. Browning.) The succeeding books of the prophets from Joshua to Malachi complete the vision of the angels descending on the terraced pathway—the Son of man. (John 1: 51.) They describe the processes of regeneration, the application of the law to life. Good then comes first, and truth second, the new will and the new understanding in their true order. Again, we catch a glimpse of the great lesson of the Book of Life to keep the heart right, or keep our feelings right, that we may see right and do it. In this way, and this alone, the lost Paradise is regained. Reformation is said to precede regeneration. But, this does not mean that reformation begins, continues and ends in one period, and then regeneration takes up the thread and continues indefinitely till all evil is overcome. Life is in time only for the body, but without time for the soul. Reformation and regeneration are somewhat like resolution and action. At times the resolution and action are consentaneous, at times not. The two are phases of many, if not of most of our experiences, and it may be very difficult to distinguish just where we are most of the time. Fortunately, it is not necessary. Each day brings its own set of experiences with our reactions to them. It is enough that we work while it is day with each experience as it comes to hand, and leave the rest with God.

Life Begins at Twenty

Humanity has now reached the fullness, of its growth. The child born today in its minority goes through the stages of race development covering thousands of years. At majority man is fully equipped for the spiritual life. He has attained his full stature—a full grown youth—and lives to grow younger in spirit, if he chooses the path of life. The business of making a living has great attractions. The world is a good place to live in. Youth is eager to get into harness. The pursuit of wealth is quite legitimate, and life's pleasures give zest to work.

Assuming Life's Responsibilities

Chapter 1. Youth plunges into life with expectation of gaining success in the highest degree. But closer contact with the world opens serious questions in the mind. Conscience calls attention to a few glaring irregularities, excesses, or positive wrongs, that demand restraint, or correction. The children of Israel are a menace to the Egyptians. A king that knew not Joseph is on the throne, and puts Israel in bondage. The world resents correction. Or, it may be youth has discovered that it is a slave to a bad habit which stoutly resists interference. Thereupon the struggle for emancipation begins in earnest. Suppose the habit is dishonesty. It has a long history. It goes back to the days of the nursery when the child took toys of another child, and resented forcibly any other child taking toys from it. The habit led to the adoption of stealthy methods of procuring special privileges or pleasures that may or may not have been definitely forbidden. There was always an excuse at hand. Occasionally when the mind was busy justifying the selfish habits, conscience would take exception. Then followed the effort to destroy these live reasons, the dictate of conscience. The King of Egypt sought to destroy the Israelitish boys as soon as they were born. But the mothers of these babes were lively, and the sons of Israel multiplied rapidly. The appeal of conscience could not be silenced, though not yet strong enough to overcome the opposition to abandon the bad habit. The call is for a Savior, and a Savior is at hand.

Applying the Law to Life

2. Two Levites had a son. The Levites were the priestly tribe and represent the connection between God and man—the love of God and man. Youth conceives the meaning of the law of the Lord when pained and distressed by his failure to change his habits. Worldly interests again come into the foreground and benumb conscience. When next the habit appears—a temper, or a form of greed, or impurity, or guile,—the growing spirit of worldliness casts a glamour over the evil, to shame youth's sensitiveness to wrong. Conscience—the law—is still alive, but encased in many fanciful and false ideas. The babe was in the ark of bulrushes daubed with bitumen and pitch by the river's brim. The youth still cherishes the law, and knows that he is doing wrong when he gives way to his bad habit. He may have tried many times to be master, he may even have taken a vow to conquer, and be rid of the habit, and clear his conscience then and forever. Can anything be more touching on the next defeat than the humiliation over the impotence of the law for lack of knowledge how to operate it. Pharaoh's daughter was touched with compassion at the sight of the tear on the babe's cheek on opening the ark. That humiliation is the salvation of the youth's love of the law. The experience leads to the study of the law, and how to apply it to life. Moses lived in the court of Pharaoh forty years. After close and painful study youth gains assurance in settling disputes in

which the letter of the law and its spirit are in conflict. When it is a question of hatred, or theft, or adultery, or lying, the issue is clear, and must be settled summarily without compromise. But, when the issue is between hating an enemy and loving an enemy, or the question of whether loving our enemy requires us to heap coals of fire on his head, or oppose him for the protection of others, youth cannot determine offhand with assurance what is right and what is wrong. The same difficulty faces youth when it first meets the perplexing problems of marriage, or business honesty, or worship, or intolerance, or excesses of various kinds. Youth dare not form a hasty judgment without being called in question, or facing condemnation. Moses killed the Egyptian in conflict with one of his own people. But, when he attempted to settle a dispute between two of his own people, they questioned his right to kill either of them, as he had killed the Egyptian. Therefore Moses fled from Egypt to Midian to escape punishment. In Midian Moses came to a well where he watered the sheep of Jethro's daughters, after driving away the shepherds who interfered with them. It is another picture of further study of God's Word, this time to gain a deeper knowledge of the law, the spirit of the Word. Life's trials open new and old questions of right and wrong, and youth gains confidence in approaching them with a little more insight into the causes of human suffering and sorrow. It takes courage to get rid of old interpretations of the Word (the meddlesome shepherds) to get the new interpretation. The Lord gave his disciples quite a new interpretation of the law relating to Sabbath observance, which scared away the old interpreters. Youth must procure this deeper knowledge of the law to meet life's trials, and rescue the world from bondage to evil.

The Commission

3. Here is a vision and a commission for life. The vision is simple and compelling: the angel of the Lord appears in a thorny bush aflame, but not consumed. And the commission! To deliver my People Out of the house of bondage. The connection between the two for youth is found only in the spirit. The thorny bush! Nemo me impune lacessit. Yes, but the angel in the thorny bush represents a growing sense of the Lord's mercy in protecting us from ourselves. Without Him we must sink in iniquity. Without Him we cannot be saved. If we are not as bad as many others are, we cannot take any credit to ourselves. We are unaware of the tendencies within that would ruin character and society if allowed free play. They appear on the surface in part in time of war, or any serious emergency in life. We stand on holy ground unshod and contact basic reality when our eyes are opened to the fallibility and untrustworthiness of human nature. The love that guards us from recidivism is untiring despite habitual lapses. The fire in the thorn-bush is unquenchable. The more we reflect on this the more impelling the voice from within. A like compassion for others in suffering admonishes us to give aid. Moses must accept the commission. The Lord sees the affliction of his people. He knows their sorrows, and is come down to set them free, and bring them to a land abounding in milk and honey. Moses is the chosen instrument to effect the deliverance, and accepts the commission, but pleads incompetence.

Meeting Objections

4. We argue that it is futile to attempt to change human nature or selfish habits indulged since early childhood. The answer is: with God all things are possible. Yes, of course, but Moses is doubtful. The incredulity, the obduracy, the materialism of human nature present an insurmountable barrier! God's

children must then consider the consequences of repudiating the law, which Moses represents. The power of that law is unlimited. But that power is dependent upon the spirit, as appears from the use of Moses' rod later. "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." (John 6:63.) Separate the letter from the spirit, and everything is judged according to the appearance. The rod cast from Moses' hand to the earth becomes a serpent. And what gross fallacies have been drawn from the literal sense of the Word, when interpreted only according to the appearance: salvation by faith alone, the resurrection of the dead body at the end of the world, predestination, and so forth! Indeed a conviction based upon sense impressions will not stop short of denying God, and revelation, and life eternal. Russia is not the only country where atheism flourishes. The fallacies of a judgment by appearances are not rectified until enlightened reason from the Lord shows the reality behind the shadow, life out of death. In the second place the power to do good according to the spirit of the law is desecrated when anyone takes credit to self for it. Moses' hand represents charity in fulfilment of the spirit of the law. It is profanation to do good in our own name. When Moses put his hand into his bosom it came out leprous. Deeds are lifeless until done without thought of anything in return. From God is all the power to do whatsoever good we can in this world: to Him alone belong the honor and the glory, which is much more than what the mere words express. In the third place, conformity to the best traditions of society becomes a fetich when divorced from religion. The river of Egypt, of unknown origin, is like the stream of traditional knowledge by which the people regulate their daily life. When we recognise only one standard of morality, one system of ethics, one way of doing things, one mode of preparing food, one style of dressing, one form of behavior, the nation is moribund, and does violence to the truth. The water Moses took out of the river and poured on the dry land became blood.

Who may not see that the sequel to the rejection of the authority of the law of the Lord—Moses—means the enthronement of the senses, enlightened selfishness in conduct, and one's own standard of living as final for everyone. History furnishes many illustrations in the decline and fall of nations and empires, ending in despotism and materialism. Who can fail to see the significance of the facts, and fail to accord due submission to the authority of the law? "You cannot serve God and mammon." (Lu. 16:13.) Yes! but Moses expostulates that he is no speaker. Possibly the greatest difficulty every reformer or apostle confronts is to get his message across. He feels so utterly inadequate to express his thought in simple and convincing language. His vision is clear, but it seems impossible to clothe it in language apprehensible to the uneducated, or to the contentious. Moses' difficulty, however, was surmounted by the appointment of Aaron as his mouthpiece. Moses then represents the inner law, and Aaron its meaning in the vernacular, or to the point. The difficulty of presenting a living interpretation of the Scriptures, or a convincing application of the law to life, disappears in the measure that we are possessed by the right spirit. So far as we gain the spirit of the Lord it gives us "a mouth and wisdom, which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." This applies particularly in meeting the enemy within. But, under the influence of the same Spirit surely a public speaker will more readily disarm opposition, if his hearers are open to conviction.

The Terms of the Vow

When Moses left Sinai he returned to Midian for his wife and children, and started out for Egypt. On the way God sought to kill him, but Zipporah circumcised her son, and averted the death of her husband. The "son of the covenant" is the vow made at confirmation. Unless that vow is followed by actual purification of the life, the love of the law must die. We must make the sacrifice, must take up our cross daily, and follow where the Lord leads. We must see the vow through to execution, or the law perishes.

5. "Nothing is more necessary to man than to know whether heaven be in him, or hell. To know this he must know what is good, and what evil, for good makes heaven, and evil makes hell. The doctrine of charity teaches about both." (A. 7181.)

"The first of charity is to look to the Lord and shun evils because they are sins against Him, which is effected through repentance. And the second of charity is to do goods because they are uses." (C. 1, 12.)

The Difficulty of Accepting Them

We all acquire some bad habits during early life, and become so accustomed to them that we cease to question them, or even take any notice of them. They are there to be ignored. They are part of the household, and cannot be disturbed. Let anyone call them in question, and we are immediately up in arms to defend and protect them. The day may come when the still small voice of God convicts us of sin. We try to escape condemnation, and prove that wrong is right. We even use Scripture to strengthen our fictitious excuses (bricks). We are at last aware that we are slaves to habits that are worldly and selfish. Moses and Aaron made God's children stink in the eyes of Pharaoh. The law and our new understanding of it are the source of all our trouble. We are most unhappy, even driven to despair, because we are unwilling to disturb old habits that have become a part of ourselves. The truth is there to set us free, but we are not prepared to pay the price. We listen to the gospel of hope. We are not altogether insensitive to the appeal of religion for faith, for charity, and for a reconsideration of our duty to the Lord and our neighbor. Salvation is near, if only we stand by the law. The meaning of the law then unfolds the consequences of self-worship and mammon worship, which everyone knows terminates in spiritual death. To make pleasure, or riches, or prestige, our main objective in life leads to degeneracy, and a total breakdown of character. The picture in Exodus presents the successive stages in the decline that leaves the open-minded no alternative. They must follow where the law leads.

6. The demand is for freedom to worship God by giving up the evil ways that are second nature to us. We demur. Then see plainly what happens!

The Consequences of Rejecting Them

7. In the first place it is a matter of common knowledge that when the letter of the law is divorced from the spirit we may prove any course of action to be right or wrong. The worldly recognise this as well as the unworldly. The magicians of Egypt turned their rods into serpents as well as Moses. But, though the man who seeks to do right may doubt the truth, or may see opposing views of his problem, and not know

which is true, he finally emerges with the truth as God gives him to see it. Aaron's rod—not Moses' rod—swallowed the magicians' rods. Yet again, the early teaching in the home—the traditions of ethics, and culture, and religion—receive wholly false values when forced into the service of the world and self. Anyone who lives solely for what he can get out of the world for himself will invariably violate the truth in upholding false traditions. False propagandism is of this order. The river of Egypt was turned into blood.

8. The croaking frog is an incarnation of pessimism. Wherever we turn we may find cause for complaint. We complain about the lawlessness of children and young people, the conditions of our living, the management of our cities, and so forth. We see difficulties in every opportunity to better conditions. We grumble at our lot in life. Harsh discordant notes are often heard in public and private life, and even in our secret thoughts. Frogs infested the homes and even the bedchambers of the Egyptians.

Worse still is the evil of slander or backbiting. Sarcasm, cynicism, ridicule cut to the quick. They wound one's feelings, and inflame passion. They are hateful and unclean when there is poison in them. The plague of lice hurt man and beast.

From malevolence spring pestiferous thoughts without number. Who has not been pestered with unpleasant thoughts when their enemies put in an appearance in person or in recollection? Noisome flies filled the houses of the Egyptians, and spread all over the land.

9. The spiritual life is still further injured by the unchecked growth of selfish habits. All interest in the study of religion, or of moral issues, or of general knowledge for world-betterment or self-betterment passes out of the life. The cattle of the Egyptians—horses, asses, camels, herd and flocks—all died from the murrain.

Yet, further, the man who demands the right to think and to do whatever he pleases regardless of consequences to himself or others is maddened by correction, or advice. Boils and blains broke out in man and beast when Moses sprinkled ashes from the furnace toward heaven in Pharaoh's sight.

Conscience is not quite dead. Kindly thoughts from heaven still drop into the mind, but there meet with such a cold reception that they do more harm than good. Many helpful thoughts and ways acquired in early life are abandoned. They are not in accord with the unfeeling ways of the world. Hail smote man, and beast, and herb and tree.

10. The wheat and spelt escaped, but locusts arrived devour them, together with every green thing that was left. The Egyptians then had nothing to live upon. The predominance of worldly and selfish ambitions ends in severing all connection with the spiritual life. Man ceases to be able to see the truth. Black is black, and white is black too. What is false appears as the truth, and the truth as falsity. Darkness that could be felt covered the land for three days. The end is in sight,—the death of the first-born. Faith in God and in man expire with the last spark of the love of God in man. Abandon hope, when the love of self or the world rules supreme.

The Way Out

11, 12. Good and evil cannot live together in the same person. To attain satisfaction in life man must get rid of the one or the other. Attention has been centred mainly upon the effect of the plagues on the evil until the light in them is darkness, and self and the world reign unchallenged within. This is the terminal of

"the broad and easy way that leads to destruction," and is a serious warning to the careless, or unthinking. But, its positive side defines the trials ahead for those who desire to do right, and how they may secure deliverance from evil that stands in the way. The technique of religion requires that we see first where we are at fault, or in the wrong. Second, we must feel for others who suffer by reason of our waywardness. Third, we must passionately look to the Lord for help and direction. Fourth, we must have definitely in mind the wrong in act or thought from which we crave deliverance. The general confession that "we have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone the things we ought to have done, and there is no health in us," is valueless, unless specific. The blood of the lamb eaten in each home must be put upon the lintel and doorposts of that house. "The Lord keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Ps. 121:8.) With this prayer on our lips we may celebrate the Lord's passover. We place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, prepared to give up our selfish ways one by one as He presents the opportunity to part with them from day to day. "All that ever you ask in prayer you shall have, if you believe." (Matt. 21:22.)

The Sacrament, a Festival

13. The passover is not confined to the first of its kind. It may coincide with our celebration of the sacrament of the Holy Supper. If not, that sacrament ought to strengthen the spirit of repentance by which we come at any time into closer relationship with the Lord, and share his love and wisdom. "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Lord by means of the Holy Supper, according to repentance before receiving it." (Can. IV:9.) While we are in the course of analysing our thoughts, separating the good from the evil, the Lord's saving grace is still only a memory to us, or an expectation. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him. The journey is circuitous because the crowd is neither organised nor trained to meet the enemy in the land. The Lord will not subject us to an attack from foes within, until we are fully prepared to meet it.

Emancipation from Worldliness

14. No bad habit is changed in a first attempt. There is much hidden within that keeps it alive and immovable. The Egyptians pursue the Israelites. We reluctantly follow where the law leads. The situation, however, seems to be hopeless. The Lord assures relief, but we must register a protest. We pray for deliverance, but stand still expecting the Lord to act. We must, however, move forward trustfully and then the Lord will open the way, even where we seem to be facing a deadlock. The pillar of cloud separated the two camps, and the sea parted, allowing Israel to cross on dry ground in safety. When an honest effort is made to obey even an obscure understanding of the law, we pass through hell unscathed, and thoughts that were a temptation to us before cease to have any influence over us any more. The waters returned and enveloped Pharaoh and his host, so that there remained not so much as one of them when the morning appeared.

15. The song of Moses and the people rings with the glad spirit of freedom. But the end of one experience is only the introduction to new trials. We have much to learn. The truth is bitter, but sweetened by a growing perception that "in the keeping of the judgments of the Lord, there is great reward." (Ps. 19: 11.)

Return of Evils Revives Interests in Religion

16. The people hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt, and the Lord sends bread from heaven. Marina! "What is it?" The bread of astonishment! The new understanding of God's Word is a continual surprise. It is daily bread, just enough for each day, and no more. The help we receive "to live more nearly as we pray." We need strength to meet the day's trials, and it never fails, if we meet them honestly according to our best judgment at the time. There is no gathering on the day of rest. The Lord gives us periodically a taste of his peace—a little bit of heaven—to recuperate. While free from temptation we are sustained by that which we gathered before.

17. The hunger for more love is succeeded by a thirst for more truth. The way is hard. Our complaint borders on the denial of the Lord's Providence. This ugly spirit will come up for judgment later. Meanwhile the Lord supplies our spiritual needs. Water is drawn from the rock. Lessons of life—"truths of faith"—are drawn from the facts of experience, from biography, from history, from the letter of the Word. All knowledge that has a direct or remote bearing upon present experiences satisfies an instinctive craving that sometimes gives us much discomfort, without knowing why.

Opposition to the Habit of Reading the Word

The war with the Amalekites, who attacked in the rear when Israel was tired out, depicts the chief conflict attending the whole process of reformation. The enemy contested the defile that led to the foot of Sinai where Israel received the commandments. We are liable to neglect the study of God's Word. We fail to attend church regularly, or read the Word daily, and meditate upon its message to us. We have lost the habit, or possibly have never acquired it. We find excuses for our neglect. We are tired, we get no good from it, we do not understand it, and so forth. It takes a fight to establish the habit of reading the Word, and of meditating day and night in the law of the Lord for direction and strength. We overcome all the subtle insinuations of the enemy that try to break it down, when we resolutely uphold the authority of the law over us. And how? Moses' hand with the rod of God in it is the symbol of the power and authority of the letter and the spirit of the law. Israel prevailed over the Amalekites when Moses held up his hands. But, Israel was beaten when the tired hands dropped. Therefore Aaron and Hur sustained the upraised arms, and victory followed. Here Joshua first appears as Israel's leader. To the Lord Jesus belongs the credit for the victory. Joshua bears the same name as Jesus, the Savior, whom he represents. This incident, therefore, marks the preparation for a deeper understanding of the law in the light of the Lord's life, and the pledge of loyalty to Him in keeping the law. "Moses built an altar and called it Under the Lord's Banner."

A Judicial Tribunal for the Soul

18. This experience teaches us that good comes first and truth second. We see that natural good—the good we inherit—is not stable, not really our own. It has not stood the test of trial. We might succumb under pressure from without and debase it, as has happened so often before. Our objective now must be to know good by reasons drawn from revelation, and supported by moral, civil and scientific truth. Good

from God is in harmony with the truth of things on every plane of life. Acting upon the advice of Jethro, Moses organised a judiciary for the people. The spiritual life, or the life of religion, is essentially a rational life.

Humiliation Precedes Reception

19. This leads naturally to the preparation to receive the laws of life, and assume a larger responsibility for understanding and obeying them. Every Jewish boy became "a son of the covenant" when he had passed his thirteenth birthday. The Lord was twelve years of age when he discussed the law and the prophets with the teachers in the temple, "both hearing them and asking questions." So soon as we undertake to do "our Father's business" in the world, (Lu. 2:46) we fully believe in the two great commandments and in immortality, and approach the Lord's Word in reverence. Our idea of the spiritual life is naturally very obscure. We are painfully conscious of our limitations, and dare not claim any merit for the little good we may do. In his state of honest humility we tremble at the thought of the responsibility placed upon us. The voice of God proceeded from the top of Sinai, covered with a dense cloud, as "the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud." The voice of the Spirit of truth "convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:8.) Sin in the shade, and righteousness in the light, demands judgment. It is the voice of love, however, that condemns to save. We are convinced, and accept the responsibility with fear and trembling.

20. Israel was called out of Egypt to worship the Lord, and to regain their lost inheritance. We may not worship self, or the world, or knowledge. We are responsible if we do not measure up to our standard of righteousness in the Lord. And we must return thanks to Him for every little bit of heaven we experience with its rest and peace. Hatred, impurity, dishonesty, insincerity, covetousness and willfulness must be eschewed. These are the primary rules of life. We recoil at the thought of our responsibility, but are encouraged by the assurance of the Lord's presence in the life of self-sacrifice that is to follow.

The Content of "the Ten Words"

21-24. Moses proceeds to elaborate the ten words in relation to the life of the people in the wilderness and in the promised land. He then wrote all the words of the law in the book of the covenant, and read them in the audience of the people, who solemnly pledged their lives to fulfil them. The sprinkling of the blood on the people which followed is reminiscent of "the blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28.) The glory of the Lord then appeared on the summit of Sinai, "and the cloud covered it for six days." In mercy the Lord tempers the vision to our powers of endurance. Even at that, the open Word with a growing consciousness of the meaning of the law in relation to our lives, is overwhelmingly impressive.

The Lord Dwells in His Own in Man

25-31. Now follows the vision of the pattern on the mount. We see life's model in "the tabernacle of God with men." (Rev. 21:3.) Each member must willingly offer the best he has to give to build the temple in which God may dwell with men, and they with Him. We note only the general features of God's dwelling place. The ark in the Holy of Holies comes first. This represents man's ruling love. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Ps. 119:11.) The Holy place is the inner sanctuary of the soul, our private life. The unleavened bread placed on the table before the face of the Lord is the pure Word of God. "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.) The lampstand is the light that comes from meditation on the Word. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105.) And the altar of incense is the prayer for fulfilment of the message. "Let my prayer ascend before thee as incense. (Ps. 141:2.) The outer court represents the plane of our public life. Here the injunction is, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes," (the laver.) (Isa. 1:16.) And "the life of religion is to do good" from God. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." (Ps. 4: 5.)

The Will to Do God's Will

The staves must not be taken from the ark. The effort to carry the law into the daily life must never be withdrawn. The incense evening and morning was lighted with the coal from the altar of burnt sacrifice. The inextinguishable desire to do God's will on earth as in heaven gives fervor to the prayer for more light and strength to meet life's trials. The regular offering of a lamb with the morning and evening prayers, and the dressing of the lamps, implies the surrender of self-will to God's will as it appears to us at the beginning and close of each day, or each experience.

The Garments of Salvation

The Lord dwells in us as we get rid of evil, and do good in His name. Worship in the tabernacle was kept in constant operation by Aaron and his sons, who represent "all the Lord's work of salvation." (A. 9928.) Special significance, therefore, attaches to the garments of Aaron. They represent the power vested in him who endeavors to live up to his God-given ideal. The saving power of the Lord passes down through the heavens in their order to the most commonplace issues of life in keeping the commandments. Thus Aaron was clothed with a tunic, or inner garment, a robe, and the ephod, or outer garment having the breastplate with the twelve precious stones and the Urim and Thummim in it. The coverings of the tabernacle, the inmost of fine twined linen, the inner of goats hair, the outer of the skins of red rams, and the outmost of badger's skins, protected the furniture, and especially the ark of the covenant, within. These represent the senses of the Word of God, from the outmost, or literal sense, to the inmost sense which concerns the glorification of the Lord. The outmost garment of Aaron was not of badger's skins like the outmost covering of the tabernacle. Aaron's outmost garment was like the inmost covering of the tabernacle, of blue and crimson, and scarlet double dyed. Aaron's outmost garment had also gold in it. Why this inversion of these coverings? To represent the fact that the letter of God's Word (the badger's skin) conceals the more beautiful and finer senses within, whereas the outward Christian life reveals the inner significance of the Word, and exemplifies the law of love, (the gold in the ephod and breastplate),

which is the universal law of heaven. The inner meaning of the law appears in the light as man progresses in the regenerate life, and shines forth in the life successively with the purification from evil and falsity in opposition to it. Aaron bore the breastplate of "judgment upon his heart before the Lord continually."

Every detail in the construction of the tabernacle, or in the worship there, is full of enlightenment for the heavenly pilgrim. The objective of it all is rest from labor, and joy in work done in harmony with the laws of life. So the Lord "gave Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."

Life as It Might Have Been

32. The tables Moses received from God contained the perfect law as seen in the mount. When brought into touch with the life on the plain beneath, the hideousness of the spectacle was beyond description. The people "forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt." In exalted states, when humbled, we see what life ought to be. The vision, however, does not change our nature: it only brings the old habits into, the limelight, as an unmitigated infringement of the law. Moses shattered the tables of stone at the foot of the mountain. The worship of the golden calf was a reversion to the type of worship acquired in Egypt, expressive of the worship of the world, which knows no law but the law of self-interest. The consequences are fatal. There is no escape from them. "In thy sight shall no man living be justified. Therefore is my spirit Overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate."

Life as It Is

33. It appeared as if the Lord had renounced his people. In reality the people were rebels: they had a fit of sullen obstinacy. We know that we cannot serve God and mammon. It is not enough to see this to be true theoretically, or from history. We must see it in self, see self from the inside. The picture is in the worship of the golden calf, and the punishment that followed, the breaking of the tables of the law. What is to become of us? We have alienated ourselves from the Lord. Our worship is profane when used to promote worldly success. Self is on the inside, and worship on the outside. Moses erects a tent—not the tabernacle, but a tent,—outside the camp. The people see him disappear within it, and the cloud at the entrance take his place. We fail to see the real significance of the Scriptures, and have only a dense understanding of them when unduly influenced by the world. We must see this in ourselves in the light of the Word. What then is to be done about it? Surely the Lord will not forsake us! We acknowledge our unworthiness, we realise our responsibility, and proceed on our way again under His guidance, prepared to profit by our failures. We take comfort from the evidence of God's mercies in past trials. We see the Divine Providence in the back, and not in the face.

"Keep Thou my feet: I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me."

Life to Be

34. Now follows the new order of things accepting life as it is. Life as God would have it is impossible. The tables made by God are smashed in pieces. The Lord, however, will take us as we are. Moses hewed out two tables of stone in imitation of the former two. We must fashion our lives in approximation to the perfect life,—Moses' vision of the tabernacle when he received the two perfect tables. The same law—the ten words—God will write in our feeble efforts to imitate the Christ life, or be Christian to one another. Through further temptation, and humiliation, from time to time we rise to heights above, and see what life might be. We get a vision of the law to be written on these new tables of stone. Moses spent another forty days with the Lord, fasting, on the top of Sinai. When he at last returned to the camp with the tables of the Testimony in his hand his face shone with a new light. The people were afraid, but first Aaron and the rulers, and later the people summoned courage to approach Moses and hear what the Lord commanded in the mount. Then Moses put a veil on his face which was only withdrawn when he went in before the Lord to speak with Him. The sight of ourselves in the light of the law is at times agonising. We must know, however, where we fall short in our principles and in our ordinary thoughts and actions. The naked truth may be too much for us. A reversion to worldliness, veils it temporarily. Then again we face the light whenever we turn in humility to the Word for it. Then the inner law is engraved on a life slowly being fashioned after the pattern on the mount.

35-40. This is the beginning of the actual construction, or reconstruction, of character in accordance with the will of God. Therefore, we have a "summary of all kinds of good and of truth which are in the Church and in heaven, and from which is the worship of the Lord." (A. 10725.) These are signified by the things the sons of Israel brought willingly to make the Tabernacle, and the garments of Aaron and his sons. Religion has its beginnings in newness of life within and without. During the wilderness period a cloud covered the tent, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. When the cloud rose the people journeyed, and wherever it rested they camped. Our guide is our understanding of the law. This is always obscure in times of trial. We advance to a clearer understanding of it as we are prepared to consider the interests of others more than our own, or learn to love more and hate less at all times. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Leviticus

The Art of Living

Genesis deals with the beginning of things. The expression "these are the generations," or "genealogies", occurs ten times in the book. The keynote of the book is the promise of the inheritance to one family. Exodus deals with the departure from Egypt of that family become a nation. Its keynote is the gift of the covenant to be kept in the sanctum sanctorum. Leviticus is the handbook of the priests. Its keynote is "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am Holy." To sanctify signifies "to represent the Lord as to the Divine Human, because the Lord alone is holy, and because all that is holy proceeds from Him, and all sanctification represents Him. The purifications of the external man were represented by burnt offerings and sacrifices of oxen, bullocks and he-goats; and the purifications of the internal man by burnt offerings and sacrifices of rams, kids and she-goats; but the purification of the internal itself, which is the inmost, by burnt offerings and sacrifices of lambs. Therefore what particular purification or expiation was represented can be seen from the animals themselves that were sacrificed." (A. 9988, 9990.) The blood in the sacrifices is the symbol of the "blood of the covenant." "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many." (Lu. 22:20.) In the Antitype, the Lord, we see the meaning of the types of sacrifice. Each illuminates the other; each is a part of the whole. The function of the priesthood represents the work of the Lord as the Savior. "The altar of burnt offering was the principal representative of His Divine Human and the worship of Him." (A. 10273.) The laws of the offerings, therefore, outline the technique of religion, or of salvation. It is enough that we obtain for the present a practical understanding of the general principles of this highest art of living. The practical significance of the numerous details in the laws comes to light with advancement in spiritual living.

Our Utmost for the Day's Work

Chapter 1. A burnt offering represents God's love operating in human relationships, and first of all in man's daily work. The offering of a bullock, one of the herd, and "strong to labor", is first in order. We must put the very best we have to give into our contribution to the common good from which we in turn derive our living. The blood of the bullock must be sprinkled round about upon the altar, and the flesh burned by fire. Our labor must be freed from impatience or dishonesty, and consumed by the love of service. It must also be purged of bitter or unjust criticism of the work of others. This is the burnt offering of a male sheep or goat. And the spirit of our work must be without thought of any reward. "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." (Lu. 6:35.) Here is the significance of the sacrifice of a dove, the emblem of the Holy Spirit. These sacrifices form a trine in relation to life's labors in dedicating them to the Lord.

And for the Day's Thoughts

2. The next three meat offerings represent the dedication of our thoughts to the service of the Lord. These offerings are, therefore, bloodless. The three preceding offerings contained the purification of the will in the day's work. So far as the will is purified the thoughts are true, thoughts in regard to the purpose,

thoughts in regard to the means, and thoughts in regard to the skill that enters into our work. The consecration of these thoughts is involved in the meat or meal offerings of fine flour, of unleavened cakes, and of first fruits, "green ears of corn dried by the fire."

All Credit Belongs to the Lord

3. But the three offerings which follow are blood sacrifices. Like the meat offerings they are eucharistic, or thank-offerings. But they are also attended with pain in surrendering part of the self-life which mars the joy of work—the reward of labor. The two distinctive features of these three offerings are that the blood of one of the herd of the flock, or goats, was sprinkled on the altar, and the fat removed from them, and burnt on the altar. Our joy in work well done must be freed from self-merit for the truth or the good in it. All good is from God. "All the fat is the Lord's." We dare not appropriate to ourselves any credit for it. "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood."

"Christian charity with everyone consists in faithfully performing what belongs to his calling, for by this, if he shun evils as sins, he every day is doing goods, and is himself his own use in the general body. In this way also the common good is cared for, and the good of each person in particular." (L. 114.)

Sins of Ignorance

4. The next set of sacrifices is expiatory, atoning for sins done in ignorance, which covers most of the sins of the world. It would be too dreadful to think of it otherwise. Even David was unconscious of the atrocity of his offence in getting rid of Uriah to have Bathsheba as his wife, until brought home to him by the prophet Nathan.

Conscious Sins—Internal and External

The expiatory sacrifices cover sins against the Church, and sins against the state. First, the violation of the first three commandments. These are inner and outer—the sin of a priest, and the sin of the whole congregation. Here the blood of the bullock was sprinkled before the vail, put on the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest poured at the base of the altar of burnt sacrifices. How do you interpret the first three commandments in relation to your thoughts and actions? Wherein do you worship idols, or ignore Christ's example, or break the Sabbath day? Sins of omission or of commission in our duty to God by reason of our self-righteousness require giving up our own will in the ruling purpose of our lives, and the strengthening of the will to do God's will by the power of prayer, and by a change of outward conduct. Our worship of God must cease to consist in specious generalities, or platitudes, or empty professions, or dead rituals. "Learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. 9:13.)

And, second, the violation of the last seven commandments. These are also inner and outer—the sin of a ruler, and the sin of any one of the people of the land. Here the blood of the sacrifice is only put on the horns of the altar of burnt sacrifice, and the rest poured out at the base of it. Repentance for sins against the spirit or the letter of the civil or moral law demands simply the more free use of the power always available to overcome self-will in perpetuating habits ruinous to the welfare and happiness of ourselves and others. "I will do whatever you ask in my name." (John 14:14.) Self-will from inmost to outmost must be consumed by the Lord's will. In every one of these expiatory sacrifices the fat of the animals, with the latent heat in it, was burned on the altar.

"The Soul That Sinneth, It Shall Die"

5-7. To sin, to see the effects of it, and be silent about it, or to be oblivious to any wrong, leaves no escape from the consequences. Neither can we touch pitch without being defiled. Rash oaths are a menace to sanity. It is necessary to think charitably of others, though he may be unable to feel charitably toward them. And if we cannot think charitably of them, we should at least hold ourselves under criticism, till we can think and feel without prejudice or anger. We wrong the Lord when we fail to acknowledge his care and protection over us in bad as well as in good fortune. Ignorance of the law excuses no one: suffering follows disobedience from ignorance or indifference. We wrong others when we deny them freedom of opinion, or violate their confidence. Insincerity is productive of much suffering in life. All these defaults call for repentance with due acknowledgment of the Lord's mercy in peace and thank offerings for newness of life from Him. Our vows and voluntary offerings are sacred and should not be broken. The heave or wave offerings represent the avowal of the work of the Spirit.

8, 9. The consecration of our lives in the service of the Lord is sometimes attended with thoughts and feelings that require to be ardently renounced. The consecration of Aaron and his sons was attended with sin burnt offerings.

Prayers Motivated by Self-Interest

10. Our prayers also may come under serious condemnation when self-interest injects itself into them. Nadab and Abihu suffered death for offering strange fire before the Lord. We must learn to differentiate between that which is holy and unholy in worship or life, and make an atonement for everything that is unclean.

11. The food we eat must also be clean. This covers a large field when we consider the amount and the variety of eating we do every day.

12. We must be purged of conceit when practical concepts are first given to us.

13, 14. The profanation of the truth—knowing the truth and living contrary to it—is a big subject, and has many sides to it. The laws affecting leprosy and the treatment of it throw much light upon this evil.

15. The offering of turtledoves or pigeons in expiation of unclean issues is a prescription for purification from thoughts issuing from the heart that defile man.

"Worship in the Beauty of Holiness"

16. The great day of atonement brings to light an important regulation to the regenerate life. Aaron should not enter the inner precincts of the tabernacle without first cleansing the sanctuary from "pollution caused by involuntary uncleanness of priests and people." During the first part of this ceremonial he was clothed in linen, but put on "the garments of praise" in the latter part of it. (A. 9670.) The approach to the adytum is an approach to the Lord and closer conjunction with Him. This necessitates further and deeper penance. "He has illustration through the Word who shuns evils because they are sins, and because they are against the Lord and against his Divine laws. In him, and in no one else, the spiritual mind is opened. This is the way of all illustration in the Word, and also the way of the reformation and regeneration of men." (E. 970.) The law of the atonement requires the complete rejection of evil as it is revealed to us from day to day. "Once in the year signifies perpetually." (A. 10209.)

17-26. Volumes might be written on the succeeding collection of laws often described as the "Law of Holiness." Little is known of the practical significance of this ceremonial law which pertains chiefly to the inner life. The meaning will emerge with a growing practical need. So far as we assume responsibilities in life we shall acquire the technique to discharge them to the gain of everyone.

27. The closing chapter specified the exchange value of vows. In how far can we measure up to our present standard? The Lord commended the unjust steward for compounding with his debtors according to their ability to pay. He does not demand perfection of us. And yet that should be our constant aim. This is signified by the reference to tithing with which the book closes. "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."

Numbers

The Church Militant

Chapter 1. How far do we measure up to our present standard? How well are we prepared to meet the world? The census of the children of Israel was first taken fourteen months after leaving Egypt, and one month after the tabernacle had been set up at the foot of Sinai. The princes numbered every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war. Israel came out of Egypt a promiscuous crowd of men, women and children. The first step toward organisation is to ascertain their military strength. The numbering of the tribes means to set in order and dispose all the teachings of religion for the conflict with evil in self and in the world. The Levites were not numbered. Their duty in times of war or peace is to maintain the service in the tabernacle. They represent the spirit that unites man to man and to God. We estimate the power of the truth by arguments that prove its practical worth. The esprit de corps is an unseen and an unknown quantity until put to the test in conflict. In the bands of a resolute self-sacrificing spirit the truth is invincible.

The Order of Encampment

2. The order of the tribes in the camp presents a picture of the order of the hosts of the Lord. It also presents a picture of the church militant. This is no particular religion, or denomination, but the people individually and collectively in whom is the church, whether they belong to any church or to no church. The camp represents the living church, the invisible church. All its members are related to each other in groups, and as a whole. Their organic connection is known to the Lord alone. The Lord coordinates and interrelates all that is good and true in everyone both individually and collectively for the restoration of his kingdom on earth. It is impossible to figure out the processes by which all the nerve centres in the brain coordinate in making use of the knowledge stored up within it for the day's work. No more can we grasp how the forces are organised and disciplined for the conflict with evil and the redemption of society. It is enough that we first learn the meaning of God's law and its application to existing conditions in self and the world. The Lord will order and dispose it all for service later. That is the order of encampment.

The Order of March

In the order of march Judah, Issachar and Zebulun on the east are the vanguard, and Reuben, Simeon and Gad on the south form the second rank. The tabernacle under the care of the Levites is in the centre. Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin on the west follow in the third rank, and Dan, Asher and Naphtali on the north take the rear. Those in the greatest love to the Lord and greatest light (Judah and Reuben) advance first, and those in the least degree of love and light (Ephraim and Dan) last. The camp moves forward as heart and head in all reach a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the law under the instruction of the Great High Captain.

3, 4. The progress of civilisation in the world depends in the first instance upon an advancing understanding of the law of the Lord in relation to human affairs. To this end the Church serves to unfold the meaning of the Scriptures, and present the truth about life to men. This is clearly indicated by the function of the four groups of Levites who surrounded the tabernacle in the centre of the host. The name Levi means adhesion, or conjunction, which for the spirit is effected through love. The Levites who ministered in the tabernacle and transported it through the wilderness, therefore, represent the only medium that can open the Word and conjoin man to God, and man to man, namely, spiritual love, or charity. The families of the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath and Merari, who moved the tabernacle when on the march, represent those who work out the progressive ideal of the law of love, while Aaron and his sons demonstrate the practical value of it. Moses himself impersonates the voice of God through conscience, which summons all the forces in man to obey. Nor is conscience a voice apart from all that is in man. Everything within the man goes to make conscience. Man as much makes conscience, as conscience makes man. For man—singular or plural—only responds to conscience according to the driving power of an unselfish love back of it.

Love Never Fights

The Levites were not numbered as fighters. They were numbered from one month and upward in lieu of the first-born, and were also numbered from thirty to fifty years of age as assistants in the service of the tabernacle. The first-born is love, and is seen in its purity in the innocence of infancy. This is the heart of religion. But religion only begins to operate with power with the maturation of the faculties, and after some experience of life's trials. This is the significance of the number thirty. The Lord was about thirty when He began His ministry. The meaning of that fact is the only point of interest in it today.

Truth Learned in Self-Examination

5. The process of numbering, or taking an estimate of character, goes on steadily. Three pictures are presented for guidance in surveying: the seclusion of lepers from the camp, paying the price of restitution for personal injuries, and a trial by ordeal to prove the innocence of a wife suspected of unfaithfulness. During self-examination the Lord often shews us where we are insincere, or hypocritical. As often He reveals unjust thoughts against our neighbor which ought to be indemnified. And conscience frequently calls in question our motives for perfectly good actions.

6. The power of the Word is in the letter—the hair of the head. There is a grave danger of destroying the power of the letter by putting a meaning into it entirely foreign to it, and spiritualising it away. The spirit is in the letter. We recognise it without argument as we live in the spirit of the great benediction with which the chapter closes.

A Progressive Church

7. The dedication of the tabernacle to the service of the Lord follows. The repetition of the offering by each of the twelve tribes intensifies the impressiveness of the same experience in men of the most diverse interests in life, who give themselves up to the service of their fellowmen. This ensures progress. The wagons which the princes of the tribes brought to the sanctuary were given to the Gershonites and Merarites to carry the heavy parts of the tabernacle in transit to the Holy Land. The Kohathites carried the more precious furniture on their shoulders. So the Church teaches the way of life, and the people make the application to existing conditions. Progress is gauged by the effort to shun evil and do good. Church and state advance together as the actual more and more approximates the ideal. As a counterpart on the lower plane we have the teaching in the schools and universities and the attendant increasing speed in the wheels of industry which mark our material progress. With the wagons and oxen go other offerings which signify elements of spirituality in reformation and regeneration.

8. The Church must keep up with the times, relighting its lamps, getting a new understanding of the Scriptures, and reconsecrating its priesthood for service in a progressive world.

"Thanks Be to God"

9. Everyone must keep the Passover commemorating deliverance from bondage to evil at the appointed time, or, if then absent, or unclean, a month later. Every time we are freed from tribulation we should recognise the hand of the Lord, and rejoice. Indifference or selfishness may deaden our appreciation of the Source of relief. Soon or late we must see it, and greet our Helper openly. It is said that nature works a cure in sickness, yet we fail to see the whole truth until we acknowledge the Author of the *vis medicatrix naturae*.

Marking Time

Every day has its lesson to learn. We may be slow to grasp the meaning of life. We may be ultra-conservative. The cloud rests over the ark, and remains there until we see wherein we oppose progress, and why. We may be despondent or rebellious, because life does not move fast enough for us. The pillar of fire is there in our darkest hour, to remind us of the Lord's patience and mercy. Whatever our thought or mood may be the Lord is ever present awaiting the opportunity to enlighten and direct us on the heavenward path. The cloud is the guide through the desert. The meaning of the law is never perfectly clear while duty is an abstract consideration. Progress waits upon the test of theory in practice. A tree is known by its fruits.

10. We formulate our convictions about right living, our doctrines, reforms, working hypotheses. We frequently advocate them with zeal. The silver trumpet calls for the assembly, for an open forum, for controversy, for progressive action, or for war, or for consecration to a cause. The heart leads, the head follows. The mind is disciplined in right thinking, and progresses slowly to the point of action, when the truth is put to the test for final proof or disproof.

11. The lack of agreement in matters of belief frequently awakens bitter antagonisms. The camp suffers from fire and the lust for flesh. The manna from heaven is unpalatable. It is a hard lesson to learn to tolerate wide differences of opinion, and preserve the spirit of unity when shaken, or restore it when broken. The tendency is to suppress diversity, to enforce unity. Dictatorship may get the semblance of unity, but at the expense of freedom of conscience to everyone. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" The plague hurts those who lust for the power to crush dissenters.

12. Freedom of speech, however, has its limitations. Constructive criticism is often necessary. The critic may suffer for it. The Lord Himself was crucified for bearing witness to the truth. Unjust judgment, however, condemns the critic. The law of the Lord takes in the wise and the simple alike. Aaron and Miriam were unjustified when they attacked Moses for having an Ethiopian wife, who represents the simple good. Moses took no offence. But Miriam became a leper, and was only relieved from the disease after a seven days' separation from the camp, by the urgent prayer of Aaron. Bigotry is a form of profanation that separates man from his fellowmen, and needs deep repentance to rectify.

The First Reconnaissance

13, 14. The tribes reach the southern confines of the promised land. Twelve are sent to investigate and to report upon its suitability for a home. They brought back samples of the fruits. It was a good land, but had walled cities and giants in it, and could not be conquered. Caleb and Joshua stood heroically for a minority report. Take a sight of heaven! Imagine what this world might be if the nations got together, and everyone did his utmost to make life richer and better for all the rest! Behold a cluster of grapes that takes two men to carry, and pomegranates and figs! Such fruits! but, powerful vested interests with gigantic pretensions defy interference. It would be the height of folly to attempt to change the order of things that has existed from time immemorial. You cannot change the world: better fall into line than be ruined! That is the cry touching the world without. Touching the world within it runs—"It is useless for me to attempt to change my nature! To love those whom I despise? and hate? Better leave well enough alone."

We may sometimes feel that way, and yet be conscious of a mild protest. That tame dissent must not be lost, but must grow until faith becomes pungent as "a grain of mustard seed that will move mountains." (Matt. 17:20.) It is vain to attempt reconstruction with a listless mind or purpose. The eye must be single, the motive unselfish, and the hand steady and firm. The tribes had to suffer discipline in the wilderness for thirty years until all of that generation over twenty years of age had died. The younger generation with Caleb and Joshua alone entered the land.

15. Instructions now follow regarding the service in the tabernacle when they enter into the land. The part of the mind open to instruction learns more about the heavenly life. It is a criminal offence to gather sticks on the Sabbath day. Sticks for fire! Stray considerations of self-merit to afford comfort in a cold and unappreciative world! Such thoughts must be proscribed if we would fit ourselves for the task before us. Even in relation to the most trivial acts of kindness, our thoughts should turn to the service of others and not to ourselves. This is the ribband of blue in the border of our garments.

The Supremacy of God's Law

16. The authority of the law is a perennial issue during this instruction period, in both Church and state, in matters of love and faith, in questions of religion, morals and civics. Korah and his two hundred and fifty adherents questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron; and Dathan and Abiram, rebelled against Moses for misleading and deceiving the people. Moses put the question to the test. The earth opened and engulfed them and their households, while fire consumed the followers of Korah. Sympathisers in the camp were smitten by the plague.

This presents a terrible lesson. To deny the supremacy of God's law, or question the permissions of Providence for human betterment, opens the way to hell, and destroys the love of God in the heart.

17. The law of love,—the saving love of God in Christ,—dominates all the teachings of the Church. Aaron's rod alone budded, and was placed before the ark in the holy of holies as a token against any further rebellion. The pilgrim must be ever "watchful" that he is actuated by the law of love in all life's experiences. The rod yielded almonds, a word that means "watchful". "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Self-Love Alienates Man from God

18. This incident throws light on the meaning of the repeated statement that the stranger who approaches the tabernacle shall be put to death. Self-worship is the antithesis of the worship of God, and must be cut off. This is not effected by a word of condemnation, but through the extinction of it every time it appears. And it often comes into the light for judgment, just when the love of the Lord operates in the soul. The Levites keep the charge of the tabernacle for the services in it. They bear the iniquity of the priesthood, and are sustained by offerings of the people,—the heave offering, the Holy Spirit. It is the mystery of suffering, the passion of the cross. The Lord bore our iniquities, and removes our sins as we bear our cross without a murmur, without breaking under it. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10.)

Self-Confidence Spoils Culture

19. A calf growing rapidly on the mother's milk and full of playfulness is an image of youth, well educated, well bred and full of life. Unfortunately snobbishness is often a concomitant of this estate, even though it may not always assert itself in conduct. When unmasked it becomes apparent that culture and wit are dead as ashes when destitute of the heartfelt appreciation of the good in others, howsoever meagre that may be. The self-use of the waters of separation made of the ashes of the red heifer, or cow-calf. "The natural of man from birth is contaminated and crammed with evils," (M. 146.) It is a dead body, to touch which, or sense definitely, entails purification. "The soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even." "At the time of evening there shall be light." It is the beginning of a new day' every time we see though dimly that "the flesh profiteth nothing, the spirit only giveth life." (John 6:63.)

20. The presumptuous spirit in which Moses and Aaron drew water from the rock for a rebellious people further exemplifies the point. Self-conceit damns culture or refinement. Nor is there any shortcut to the correction of any defects in character. Edom will not let his brother Israel pass through his territory. The natural disposition, soured by life's hardships, contests the way. At mount Hor Aaron dies, and Eleazer takes his place. Aaron might not enter the land, because he became exasperated over the complaints of the people. The Savior's love cannot operate within when patience gives way to petulance. This weakness must be surrendered to proceed on the heavenward path.

A Costly Detour

21. The conviction that impatience is futile in life's battle gives a victory over an enemy that had tied up some of our forces in the past. Israel punished Arad for prisoners taken captive years earlier. The arduous journey compassing the land of Edom again tested the people's patience. Israel resented Edom's unbrotherly treatment. Israel returned evil for evil. What wonder the people again loathed the bread from heaven. Many died from the bite of fiery serpents. In penitence they appealed to Moses, and were healed by looking up to the brazen serpent.

Compassing Edom! Herein is a last temptation in the wilderness to succumb to the subtle importunity of human nature, rigorous in its antagonism to the spiritual life, deaf to reason, and insinuating the consummate folly of trusting in the Lord. Must we abandon all our convictions and expectations in meek submission after having suffered so much for them? And that merely because the task before us seems to be hopeless and futile! The example of the Lord rises up before us revealing the power of the Word to glorify "our nature," which He took upon Him in this world. We cannot surely afford to ignore the significance of that which He suffered solely for our sakes! "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the SON OF MAN be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:14.)

The First Bit of Heaven Regained

All this searching of the reins and heart at length opens the way to the confines of the promised land. Two kings occupied the territory on this side Jordan, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan. They opposed Israel's advance, but were defeated, and Israel took possession of the first division of their inheritance. Moab and Ammon, descendants of Lot, also occupied part of this region, but were friendly to Israel. The land "on this side Jordan" represents the outer plane of the spiritual life, orderly conduct in private and public life. Moab and Ammon represent reasonable pleasures of life which are a help to good behavior. The victory over Sihon and Og registers success through unquestioning obedience to the law in controlling habits of life contra bonos mores. On this initial foundation of rigid self-discipline, the whole superstructure is built step by step. The major work before the tribes is the conquest of the land, which presents the picture of the conquest of the hidden evils back of our actions.

The Freedom of Reason

22-25. The promised land is now in sight. Our private life must be remodeled as well as our public life. But, how shall we be sure when our motives, or feelings and thoughts are wrong? It is so easy to prove that black is white, and vice versa. Self-interest notoriously warps our judgment. The story, of Balaam's ass shows how human reason is protected by the Lord even when the sky is blackest. Judges long ago rode on asses. Why? Because the ass keeps its eyes on the ground, and, independent of its rider, chooses where to plant its foot to avoid any stumbling block, and tread on solid earth. In like manner a good judge looks to the facts of the case free from prejudice or self-interest, avoids questionable evidence, and proceeds on what appears to be safe ground to his conclusion. When tempted to justify wrong in ourselves the Lord is near. As is our need, so is his presence, here represented by an angel with a drawn sword in his hand. The angel appeared to the ass bearing Balaam on his way to curse Israel. The ass saw the angel, and swerved from the path. Conscience speaks. The Lord awakens reason to defend the right. Self-interest attempts to force reason to justify wrong. It invents reasons to approve of a spirit inimical to the welfare of others and of self also. It even threatens to silence reason, or kill conscience, to gain peace of mind. Balaam smote the ass to obey his will even to the point of death. The angel then appeared to Balaam, and made him understand that the ass had saved his life. Balaam bowed to the authority of the angel, and repented. He proposed to return home, but, no, he must proceed on his way, and speak only the word of the Lord.

Disregard reason and the cause of right suffers. But the destruction of reason spells insanity. The temptation to justify self may be extreme, and the humiliation of giving ear to conscience almost unendurable, but reason must be spared at any cost. Salvation depends upon its preservation. Therefore, Balaam blessed Israel three times, and closed with that wonderful prophecy regarding the advent of "the Star out of Jacob, and the Sceptre rising out of Israel," to redeem humanity. The whole incident gives a transcendent meaning to the Lord's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as "the King," riding upon an ass, "whereon never man sat."

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug -
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul awakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through life!
Never leave growing till the life to come.
- R. Browning. "Bishop Blougram's Apology."

The Cost of Hypocrisy

This experience brings us face to face with hypocrisy. Balaam was a hypocrite, as was likewise Balak, who seduced the soothsayer to come and curse Israel. "Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before Israel, to commit whoredom" with the Midianites. Hypocrisy is a subtle evil, and sadly misleading. It is there for our condemnation every time it is exposed to view. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into heaven." (Matt. 5: 20.)

The Ascendancy of Love

26. Where are we now? The children of Israel are now numbered again on the plains of Moab at the close of their pilgrimage through the desert. The differences in the numbering here and on the former occasion (Chap. 1), are significant. The nation had lost in number as a whole. Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim and Naphtali were fewer in number, Simeon being reduced by more than 37,000, on account of the whoredom with the Midianites. This last fact indicated that the will to obey suffered deep humiliation in the process of reformation. On the other hand, Judah and six other tribes made considerable gains in their families. The figures seem to infer the growing supremacy of the heart over the head. This conclusion is strengthened by noting that the order of the tribes is exactly the same in each list with one exception. In the former list Ephraim precedes Manasseh, while in the latter list Manasseh precedes Ephraim. This marks the ascendancy of love, or of the new will, which is the dominating factor in the regeneration of the inner life, which is to follow.

27. The five virgins, daughters of Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh, claim recognition as the heirs of their father, who had served honorably in the host. Their request was granted. They represent affections of truth of a progressive order, born of the new will in the natural man. "We cannot have reforms without reformers. Both radical and reactionary, however, must learn that they know nothing of the truth from themselves, but only from the Lord. The idea that we have the truth and all the truth needful for anyone, or everyone, has no place in heaven. Moses may see the land, but may not enter it for his presumptuousness when drawing water from the rock. Joshua—Jesus, the Savior is ordained to take his place.

28. Innocence must occupy the first place in the life before us. In all things we must look to the Lord for leadership, and recognise our works as His works in and through us. The morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb is mentioned again in this context to remind us of this truth. All work must be done in the Lord's service. The offering of the kid of the goats, to make an atonement for us, represents the acknowledgment that at best we are unprofitable servants.

29. The feast of trumpets broadcasts the call for self-consecration, in preparation for the homecoming service on New Year's Day, followed by the great Day of Atonement and the seven days of the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles. How characteristic of the cycle of life, from joy to sorrow, and then back to a fuller realisation of the mercy of the Lord in deliverance from sin. "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." (Ps. 90:15.) The sacrifices specify the *modus operandi*, which consists essentially in shunning evils as sins, and doing good in the name of the Lord.

30. In the life of religion there seems to be no reason why a man's vow should be binding under all circumstances, and a woman's vow not binding except under circumstances, according to the law of Moses. Man, however, represents reason, and woman affection. A vow which has the rational approval of either man or woman must be fulfilled. It is part of their faith, or belief, and only practice or experience can determine its validity. A vow which is volitional, or a wish, in man or woman, may be summarily dismissed to advantage, if and when reason determines that it is foolish, or unwise, or wicked.

Reaping the Whirlwind

31. Now follows the fulfilment of a vow of vengeance on Midian for enticing the children of Israel to idolatry and immorality. Vengeance is unchristian. Israel was also as greatly to blame for being seduced as Midian. The story in its spirit, however, has an altogether different lesson for us. Balaam and Midian represent foes within to whom we can grant no quarter. The conflict that ends in signing the covenant in our own blood is dramatised in the war with Midian, resulting in the death of their kings, and Balaam, and the extermination of the women who had corrupted Israel. The division of the spoil, and the oblation for the preservation of the sons of Israel who fought and won, express further surrender of self to the service of the Lord.

32. It is then meet that the land conquered in Transjordan, should be allotted to Reuben and Gad, who chose it as their home. The men of these two tribes, however, must fight shoulder to shoulder with those of the other tribes in dispossessing the nations occupying the promised land. The lots on the farther side of Jordan would be valueless should the other tribes fail to conquer the enemies in the land. Like nature in time of sickness which summons all the resources to restore health, the Church militant must preserve its integrity to regain sanity. Whatever enters into our life from without or within from day to day, we must seek the right and stand firm in the effort to main in it

33. The itinerary of the tribes in the wilderness follows. It is useful at times to consider where we have been, where we are, and whither bound. This revision of the past for us relates solely to the spirit. Here the survey is limited to the period of trials that have slowly, but surely, brought us out of a state of worldliness to a higher conception of what life might be in ourselves and in the world. Specifically the wilderness period relates to our advancement in learning the meaning of the law, or what life teaches us. "The Prophets" to follow deal with the practice of the law. These two estates of life, education and practice, may remain apart if we only live to learn. But when the value of knowledge is determined by experience the two become one—the law is written on the heart, and the life is the expression of the meaning of it. For us today that heavenly life is attainable on condition that we dispossess all the enemies that hold any place in our hearts, and share the inheritance with all who help us to regain it.

34. The boundaries of any country are important to those nations who require to observe them. The boundaries of Canaan mean nothing to us in the letter, but much in the spirit. There is a point beyond which every virtue becomes a vice. Thus far you may go, and no further. Even in eating and drinking we draw the line. We note here, however, that this boundary line differs for different individuals. Some may eat or drink more than others without harm. We, however, draw the line at temperance for all in all things. The enemies of Israel live beyond the boundary line. Heaven has its boundaries where right ends, and wrong begins. We may not be able to agree about the limit. We may do wrong in the belief that it is right, or in ignorance. The line is there all the same, and awaits further survey and delimitation, if uncertain. The correlation of the groups must also be determined by the leaders in each group for the highest efficiency of the whole.

Provision for Unintentional Wrongs

35. The spirit of charity or love is distributed throughout the land, and holds all together as a unit. There is good in every religion to preserve the state. The influence of that good extends to the confines of every community, in its homes, its industries, and its recreations. The inheritance of the Levites is in cities and their suburbs throughout the land. Six of these cities, three on either side of the Jordan, are cities of refuge. When anyone injures his neighbor unintentionally in thought, or word, or deed, and is under criticism, he may find refuge in the truth which the experience has taught him. He will not repeat the offence. But, if he does not know wherein he was to blame, or the full extent of his responsibility, he must hold his feelings in restraint, until he has seen his problem in the light, and "the truth has made him free." He may not leave the city of refuge till "the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil." "Defile not, therefore, the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel."

True Marriage and Religion Inseparable

36. The book of Numbers closes with a chapter which has no connection with its immediate context in the letter. In the spirit, however, it touches upon the fundamental problem of civilisation. Numbers express quality, and the quality of civilisation is inherently a question of marriage and heredity. Through the justification of wrongdoing from generation to generation humanity has been almost ruined. Only through the acceptance of the truth and patient effort to express it in newness of life can humanity be redeemed. The organic unity of Israel in its occupation of the promised land was dependent upon the integrity of the tribes, and that upon the marriage of the daughters of Zelophehad with their father's brothers' sons—sons of Manasseh, the son of Joseph. Manasseh the firstborn of Joseph, represents the new will by which man is saved. That new will continually generates a new affection for the truth and for newness of life in accord with it. It purifies marital love: it is the only basis of marriage, through which man acquires and transmits a new inheritance, which will transform the innocence of infancy into the innocence of wisdom in the human race.

Deuteronomy

The Heart of the Law

It is noteworthy that Numbers places the hope of the restitution of society upon the affection of truth in the new will. Moses' last words now to follow are an appeal to that new will. They constitute the second law, or the repetition of the law. The first law, as in Exodus and Leviticus, is addressed to the understanding; the second to the will. Here Moses speaks from heart to heart, and directs attention to the spirit in which Israel should keep the commandments in the land. Love to God is the keynote of the book. "The true principle of human action cannot be stated more profoundly than is here done: it was a true instinct which in later times selected Deut. 6:4-9 for daily recitation by every Israelite: and it is at once intelligible that our Lord should have pointed to the same text, both as the 'first commandment of all,' and as embodying the primary condition for the inheritance of eternal life." (Dr. S. R. Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament.") The law becomes dynamic when spoken from the heart. The Lord selected words from the sixth and eighth chapters of Deuteronomy to repel the tempter in the wilderness. These words fully meet every temptation to give knowledge, or the world, or self, which have brought humanity to the low estate in which it is today, the first place in life.

The Blessings of Trial

Chapters 1-4. In his first address Moses reviews the experiences in the wilderness. The tribes had been organised and officered so that the law might be applied to direct and discipline the host to raise its morale and efficiency. They explored the land and saw from the fruit of it that it was a good land. The walled cities and giants terrorised the people. Further trial would fit a new generation to recover its faith. The Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites had taken their land from giants, and should not be disturbed. But Sihon and Og were conquered and their land given to Reuben, and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. From this Israel should take courage. Joshua would lead them to victory over the kings on the other side of the Jordan. "Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you."

Moses concluded with a stirring exhortation to obey the law of the Lord to live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of their fathers will give them. The substitution of the thought of "heaven" for that of "the land" makes the appeal an ever present inspiration to overcome the habits of thought and action destructive of human happiness. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it," if ye serve other gods. "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." For every mistaken effort, for every injury done without knowledge, provision is made for protection until the lesson has been learned, and reparation effected. Moses reserved Bezer, Ramoth and Golan as cities of refuge in the allotments of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. "And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel."

"Love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor constitute heaven, and heaven is with everyone according to his reception of love and faith from the Lord; and they who receive heaven whilst they live in the world, come into heaven after death."

The Divine Patience

5. The second address, (Chaps. 5-26), opens with the repetition of the "ten words," but with one or two important variations. Here it is said "the Lord talked with you face to face out of the midst of the fire." A close personal relationship of God and his people strikes home the entreaty for obedience afire with the love of God. And how tender the warning—"that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt." God is no respecter of persons. We are all members of one family—his children. All service ranks alike with Him in whose sight there is no first or last. For everyone human nature is hard to change. It takes Omnipotence to emancipate us from habits long bred in the bone. Yet the Lord never forces us. He gives us rest to recuperate, and takes us at our own time. "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever."

6. The increase of power for good grows with the observance of the law. The education of our children in the law is their birthright. But there are children born of the spirit as well as of the body awaiting the application of the law. "The wish is father to the thought." Our thoughts need constant revision. The process of purification is like that of the elimination of impurities from the blood and body. It goes on perpetually, when in action, or at rest, in relation to private and public matters of every kind. There is danger in forgetting our responsibilities and neglecting our duty. We owe it to the Lord to bless others as we have been blessed. "It shall be our righteousness that we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us."

Action and Reaction

7. The conflict between good and evil must be relentless and fearless. There can be no compromise with evil. The odds are always on the side of right. It is never a question of numbers, but of purpose and backing. The Lord keeps covenant and mercy with those who love Him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face to destroy them. The speed of recovery, however, cannot be hastened. We ourselves make the pace. It is slow because it must be thorough, and there can be no further retrogression now. Our gains must be sure, and free from self-merit. The enemies' gods must be destroyed, and no abomination find a place in our homes. The victory is the Lord's, not ours.

8. Our trials are tests of faith. They humble us; they turn the heart to the Lord for daily bread for daily needs. The soul is restored, and we learn anew that the only satisfaction in life exists in living according to the precepts of love and faith. As we come into harmony with the laws of divine order everything takes on a new meaning. The simplest facts of life exemplify the law. We find "sermons in stones, books in running brooks, and good in everything." (Shakespeare, "As You Like It.") But we must be on constant guard against the growth of pride. Failure to recognise the Lord in giving us the power to get wealth in knowledge or money, with its increasing responsibilities, means the ruination of character.

9. When we face pride, we face the real children of Anak. Understand then that the Lord "goeth before thee as a consuming fire to destroy them: so thou shalt drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee." We have not been introduced into this new state of living for our own righteousness, but to drive out the evils that should have no place in life. They are there; we have seen

them in part in previous experiences. We review these experiences: they keep returning to our conscious memory, and remind us of weaknesses that still exist, Self- will is not mastered in a day's fight. Its contumacy, however, is weakened every time we set our face against it.

10. Though we fail to reach perfection, the second set of two tables of the law enshrined within the heart are a guarantee that the Lord will not forsake us so long as we keep up the struggle to do his will. Our trials may bring out the worst that is in us; they also assuredly bring out the best that is in us. The Lord is on that better side to strengthen it to overcome that which is worst. "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude."

"The Life Is More Than the Meat"

11. Our quest in life with its new attitude toward trial places us upon an altogether higher level. Egypt is a garden of herbs watered by the foot. A worldly life is sensuous, drab, monotonous and unsatisfying. Canaan is a land of mountains and valleys. It drinketh water of the rain of heaven. "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of it." In the ups and downs of the spiritual life there is always something to learn which deepens our interest and satisfaction. We are conscious of the Lord's care for us, whenever our thoughts are centred on, the removal of the innumerable barriers to the larger life of others, and particularly the barriers to it in ourselves. We continually note the presence of right and wrong in the day's thinking, and the need of sustaining the right and rejecting the wrong. The ultimate outcome is assured. We may lose faith at times because the task seems endless and hopeless. Enough then that we remove the load of anxiety, and do the work of each day as it comes. "Ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I am putting before you this day."

Idolatry

12. The injunction to destroy all forms of idolatry in the land refers to idolatry in ourselves. We establish the worship of the one and only God in heaven and earth—the Lord Jesus Christ—in our hearts as idolatry is weakened and destroyed. The tenth of whatever we have which is given to the Lord means the acknowledgment that everything we possess or are is from Him. There is, but one place where God can be found and worshipped—in the heart where love dwells. That love is represented by the Levite, a love that conjoins us with God, and with one another. And whatever the sacrifice or offering we bring we must share it with all alike without thinking of the price paid for it. The cost in suffering to be just to others must be forgotten in the joy of fellowship. It is all God's gift. This is the significance of eating the flesh, but not the blood of the sacrifice. "Ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water." The blood is the life: the price we pay for what we give to others is its value. But, the gift is valueless when we think of ourselves in it. Sic transit gloria mundi. "What I spent, I had: What I saved, I lost: What I gave, I have." (Holman Hunt.)

Pride

13. If anyone should speak flatteringly of our accomplishments, and tempt us to overestimate our worth or capability, we should be quick to recognise the voice of the prophet and dreamer. An inflated idea of our own importance is not compatible with a whole-hearted and whole-souled worship and love of God. And as regards every other temptation from within or from without, our thoughts and feelings must be under constant observation, to detect every tendency to fall away from the worship of the Lord. "Good from the Lord is heaven to the angels, and not anything of their own." (H. 12.)

Self-Pity

14. Self-pity is uncalled for in mourning for lost friends. "If ye loved me," the Lord said, "ye would rejoice because I said I go unto my Father; for my Father is greater than I." (John 14:28.) Death to the angels means resurrection. It ought to mean the same to us when we think of our friends, and not of ourselves.

We live by that which we eat. Good affections and inclinations are strengthened by a study of the best in life, and the assimilation of that which nourishes the kind of character we desire to be. A degraded taste finds nourishment for the reprobate. But no character worthy of esteem can exist without recognising full indebtedness for it to the Lord. We receive freely, as we give freely.

We Owe More Than We Can Pay

The poor make a constant claim upon our help. They must not be neglected. It is good that we open heart and hand to save them from the pangs, and acute sufferings of poverty, and help them bear their trials in every way possible, with discrimination, and without condescension. Our obligations to the poor, however, go much deeper. Charity begins at home. We are poor in the ratio that we contract debt and know not how or when we can repay it. Therefore we continually pray that our debts may be forgiven as we forgive our debtors. We incur debt to our Heavenly Father when we hold others as our debtors too strictly to account. We accept all they give or do for us, and return the least possible. We turn against them as soon as they cease to favor us, or serve us in any way. We become more and more exacting in our demands the more seriously they trespass against us. It is a sabbatical year for us when we realise our own poverty, our own need. Our spirit is not right. We live to be served, rather than to serve. We must forgive to be forgiven. Sometimes we hold others in subservience to us in our thoughts about them. It is hard for us to grant them freedom. To be forgiven we need to release them from their indebtedness to us, and leave them free to square their account with God, just as we ourselves are in the effort of so doing. In the exact measure that we put an end to the evil we do at the expense of the happiness of other people do we receive the Lord's forgiveness, and square our account with Him.

16. Every deliverance from evil in heart, and thought and life is cause for increasing thanksgiving to the Lord. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee." We give, or use to better advantage whatever we receive as we free our judgment from greed or partiality. "Heaven is a kingdom of uses." Our worship of God must be freed from selfish considerations, or idolatry.

"Be Perfect as the Father in Heaven Is Perfect"

17. The animals for sacrifice must be without blemish. When we come into the Lord's presence our feelings should be sincere and selfless. We know how hard it is to attain and maintain, this state of mind. Before we are aware of it our mind turns to some ugly experience, and a controversy is started with self-condemnation and self-justification. Religion calls for a judgment in which love and reason play an equal part. Experience in forming just judgments leads to the institution of general principles—a king—for the guidance of conduct. The principles we adopt, however, are rarely final. They must always be subject to modification, and even change, to conform to a purer understanding of the law of the Lord—the law of love.

We May Know When We Fall Short of Perfection

18. Love—God's love—has no bounds. The Levites had no inheritance in the land, but had their portion in every tribe. In the individual the Levite represents the selfless side of man's nature, without which he would be irredeemable. In the community the love of the neighbor is the common factor in every religion that gives life to it. And that life is supported and sustained by the varied forms of good life in each religion—"the burnt offerings made to the Lord." That life must be free from everything that defiles or debases character. "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." In anticipation of the time when the deeper evils in the race will come to the surface for judgment the Lord promises the advent of a Prophet who will gainsay the word of false prophets, and lead in the way everlasting. The Old Testament will be made plain in the New Testament. And both Testaments will in the future more fully reveal the word of life to an expectant world. "The time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father." (John 16:25.) Experience, for good or ill, is the criterion of the right interpretation. "When a Prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my Words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:49.)

Apparent Shortcomings

19. Judgment is still the subject of the address. Hatred is the opposite of love. When we hate in ignorance and are convicted of it a refuge lies before us to live and learn. But premeditated hatred destroys the love of God in the heart. The crime can only be expiated by the complete renunciation of it. We set the bounds to "righteous indignation." They border closely on neighborly love. It is easy to remove the landmark. One witness—the truth alone—is not enough to pass judgment. The motive, the facts of the case and the effect on others may all need to be taken into account to get at the truth. But, if a false witness enter into the situation, the issue must be decided "before the Lord, the priests, and judges." False witness must be eliminated from the issues of life and death in the heart. The consequences of sin are inescapable—"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." The scribes and Pharisees interpreted the law as a justification for retaliation. The Lord reversed their interpretation, without abrogating the law, when He taught his disciples "that they resist not evil." (Matt. 5:38, 39.) Indeed, the law operates both for him who does evil and for him who returns evil for evil. To the extent that we do evil, we bring evil upon ourselves.

Unlimited Power Available

20. When the odds seem to be against us in the soul's conflicts the teaching of the Church admonishes us to fear not, "for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, and to save you." It is bad policy to fight with a divided interest, or a faint heart. When attacking public problems we should be sure first that there is cause for an offensive. When evil resists interference we should promptly dispose of every argument in its favor. The men in foreign cities must be killed, the women and children saved. But in dealing with private evils of which we know the causes at work, we must save alive nothing that breatheth. During any prolonged siege we must refrain from indulging in personalities, and keep to the issues at stake. (Deut. 20.)

Laws of Order

21. To hate anyone is to kill him. Sometimes we call hate righteous indignation. We then kill justifiably in self-defence or in the defence of others! Possibly. But some day we have to reckon with conscience, which demands an inquest of all the circumstances on which we base our judgment, and a searching of the heart to determine whether our feelings were innocent, or not. Indignation may be justified, but we stand in need of forgiveness, if there is even a trace of hatred mixed up in it.

Sometimes in such conflicts within we may use a line of defence to clear conscience that seems to be most plausible, but later proves to be untenable. Self-justifications that are untenable become part of our nature while we favor them, and are hard to give up. They must go without any thought of superiority in the sacrifice.

A man may love some of the teachings of his Church, and hate others. For example, it is not uncommon for men, and women too, to hate—at least in practice, if not in theory—the Lord's counsel to greet tribulation with a cheer. The first-born of the practice of this teaching is the beginning of spiritual strength. Put to the test and withstanding it merits more commendation than Christian effort in well-doing that is wholly agreeable.

An ungovernable temper, becomes second nature, and regarded as part of one's menage, must be condemned and dislodged. Some offenders were hanged, and others stoned in olden times. Stoning implies the refutation of falsehood by reason. Hanging represents condemnation and rejection of a passion, or lust, by force of will. To leave the body on a tree after sunset implied that the rejection was incomplete. We sometimes make a reservation. It is, however, useless to compromise with evil, when beyond question, or unmixt. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." (Matt. 5:30.)

22. The law requires restoration of a brother's stray ox, or sheep. All deviations from the path of duty or rectitude should be set right as soon as they are discovered. Honest doubts may delay the disclosure of our errors. Similarly, faulty reasoning and equivocal language need rectification whenever found. Mannishness and effeminacy are undesirable characteristics in the sexes. Cruelty to animals is a bad offence. Plagiarism is still worse. In building character it is well to have sound reasons for our actions, or behavior, to avoid misunderstanding, if called in question. The Church—the vineyard—should confine her teachings to brotherly love—"the law and the prophets." In preparing the heart to receive seeds of truth it is useful to mark the distinction between reading God's Word for practical instruction, and reading it to

confirm doctrine, or dogma. There is also a difference between the appeal to perception and the appeal to reason. There is virtue in the letter of the Word,—the hem of the Lord's garment. Our words should always ring true. The outward life also should be single, unmixed with evil. This is involved in the laws of chastity in marital and premarital relationships. (Deut. 22.)

23. The worship of the Lord should be freed from blemish in thought, and word and deed. Cleanliness is next to godliness. (Read 2 Cor. 6:16-17: 1.) Do not oppress a criminal. Do good to a brother, hoping for nothing in return. Look for improvement in those who do wrong, or hold what we believe to be false views in life, and stimulate the good in them. Engagements should be regarded as sacred obligations to be fulfilled with due regard to the good of all concerned. The fruits of experience in social or business life may profitably be shared with all who can appreciate and profit by them, but not for personal distinction or renown.

24. The law of purity requires complete divorce from popular teachings which experience proves to be immoral. Premature and superficial judgment frequently turns down many new teachings that merit impartial consideration. Every man must do his own grinding. His right to think and reason as he pleases is unimpeachable. Any denial of it through coercion or intolerance is a menace to his very life. To appropriate the truths of religion for self—advancement, and deny them in the heart, is profanation. Beware of such hypocrisy. "Lend, hoping for nothing again." Give information freely without figuring too closely on the returns. It takes time to dissociate the thought of merit, or hire, from services rendered. Failure to forgive as we are forgiven places sin at our own door. The gleanings of the cornfield, the vineyard and the olive grove are for the stranger, the orphan and the widow. Excellent advice in the letter, and in the spirit too! In the spiritual sense it goes still deeper. We should never rise from our study of the Word, or count our gains through life's experiences, without feeling that we have more and yet more of the life of religion to learn from the Lord both for ourselves, and for others too.

25. We often discuss knotty problems in our hearts. The Lord, the judge, tempers the chastisement inseparable from temptation and sacrifice for the right even to the breaking point, but no further. "The wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." (Ps. 76:10.) In threshing out the lesson for each day—"our daily bread"—the natural man must be free, and under no restraint. As God grants us freedom, so should we extend the same to others. Offspring is the crown of life. The wife without issue is under reproach. The brother of a deceased husband, who refuses to remove that reproach, is a discredit to the family, justifying the renunciation of him as a member of it. We may find our standard in a particular line of conduct is nonproductive, and substitute for it another cognate standard that will not work. This seems to be applicable to our futile attempts to solve our social problems. In this connection also we should be on guard in fixing responsibility. "As we judge, so shall we be judged." The enemy that surreptitiously attempted to break down our morale, when first we sought the Christ life, still dogs our footsteps. "Thou shalt not forget it."

26. So soon as we have had our first taste of heavenly blessedness it becomes our first duty to share it with the Giver. The first fruits of the land and the tithes of the third year are symbols of the first fruits of the new life tendered in simplicity to the Lord in grateful recognition of his loving kindness. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Ps. 103:2.) This, however, does not mark the end of life's journey. It is rather the commencement of a new cycle, with limitless possibilities of development on a higher plane in unfolding the deeper significance of these very statutes and judgments of the Lord. The good life everlastingly is a unit expressive of the Creator's life in his creatures.

Blessings Inherent in Keeping the Law

27, 28. In conclusion Moses gives instruction to write the law on plastered stones, and ratify the covenant in assembly at mount Ebal after entering into the land. Then follows a brief specification of blessings that follow obedience to the law, preceded by a long list of curses, that is succeeded by a still longer list of curses, for disobedience. The curses, like the negatives in the ten commandments, predominate; and they are terrible, and most of them difficult to apply to life. We cannot think of these curses as applicable to other people for their sins. Ours not to judge, or condemn!

And Curses in the Breaking of It

The curses, however, have a most practical bearing upon our own lives. Their prime purpose is to unveil the secret tendencies of the heart to diverge from the path of rectitude. It is a blessing that the meaning of the curses is veiled. Probably very few of us today are prepared to face the light. We could not stand reproof. The simplest wrong has a content, as also a contact with hell, of which we are almost wholly oblivious at the beginning. The pressure of the ocean is on the dikes of Holland. A hole in them at any point would soon let the ocean in and inundate the country, if not closed as soon as it appears. "Had not the Lord been on our side, when men rose up against us, the floods had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our souls." (Ps. 124:1, 4.) The later experiences of the regenerate life uncover the content of what appears on the surface as a simple evil, as we are able to bear it. The history of Israel ends in the dispersion, and survival of a mere remnant. Life grows harder within, not easier. The curses are there like deepening shadows to intensify the high lights. The light is there for judgment, and increases only as the deeper evils in the heart are seen, and removed.

29, 30. Therefore the aged leader exhorts the people to obedience by the recollection of past experiences. The curse, or unhappiness, is our warning. "Those things are revealed to us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." The blessing and the curse, life and death, are there together that we may choose life. "That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him, for He is thy life and the length of thy days, that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." The choice is repeated indefinitely until the conflict is complete.

31. Moses invokes courage from the people, and from Joshua in particular. The Levites must read the law in the hearing of the people every seven years. The spirit of holiness in keeping the law must be ever present. To the charge to Joshua is added a song for the people to revive their courage in life's conflicts, which are to follow.

32. Moses' swan song extols the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord, and deplores the ingratitude and perversity of Jeshurun, his people, who have brought such a curse upon themselves. Nevertheless, the Lord will not permit the enemy to triumph. He will rescue his own even when ruin seems imminent. The cadence resounds with consolation and hope.

Moses' Last Words

33. The premonition of his impending death gave Moses the cue to pronounce his benediction. His blessings differ from the blessings of Jacob. Jacob sees mainly the actual and potential character of his sons; Moses visualises the tribes in the land fulfilling their glorious destiny under the guidance and protection of the God of Jeshurun. The prayer for Judah in its isolation forecasts the hand of Providence with the remnant of whom the Savior was born. The blessing of Levi exalts the authority of the law to save the nation from the consequences of rebellion. The rich blessing of Joseph falls to his children Ephraim and Manasseh, articulating the importance of understanding and of loving the Word for the good of all. Moses' last words guarantee a supreme blessing to God's people: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee: and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Death and Burial of Moses

34. This ends the books of "the law." Taken in relation to "the prophets" these books make known the perpetual processes of man's education for the life eternal. It is an end, and at the same time a commencement. Everything learned in regard to our duty to God and our fellowmen in infancy, childhood and youth gives us a vision from the heights of the nature and the possibilities of the heavenly life. It is all there in theory, or in the abstract. The meaning of it in practical life is now to follow on life's battlefield. Before we can begin the real business of living, however, we must lose the conceit in our interpretation of the law that has been asserting itself more and more up to this point.

This has a parallel in the growth of self-confidence in acquiring a knowledge of earthly things. At first we accepted instruction on the authority of our parents and teachers without question, but gradually substituted the personal equation as we regarded our own opinion and feelings in comparison with those of other people, often to their discredit. The conclusion that we know it all closes the mind to further learning.

On the spiritual plane of life this presents a situation which is often emphasised by man's estrangement from the Church, and the need of the Lord's guidance and saving grace. Our salvation is dependent upon a complete surrender of the mind to the Lord's guidance. The surrender of the will—the new birth—in the life of regeneration follows. But, first comes submission to the Lord's guidance in learning the practical meaning of the law, the law at work through conscience in relation to the problem of the day, or of the hour.

We have the vision—the theory—but debar ourselves from an understanding of its application to our inner life, except in so far as we become docile as a child. The Lord removes self-confidence from the heart when in humility we are prepared to learn of Him, and live from Him. Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the mountain top, saw the land, and then God took him. His body was "buried in a valley in the land of Moab, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day." Burial means resurrection. The ever expanding vision of the possibilities of life is ours in perpetuity, as our pride in self-intelligence is removed from the heart by the Lord. The adjustment to the new situation has its difficulties. Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Henceforth the leadership of Israel is transferred from Moses to Joshua.

"And the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses." How plain! Prophecy, which begins with Joshua, deals with the fulfilment of the law. It is the story of the spiritual life—the everlasting life of heaven through the conquest of self and the world.

To the biblical critic the structure of the books of the law presents many serious difficulties. These books seem to be the work of many authors and redactors. There are strong evidences of careful selection from various source materials, of a rearrangement of the parts, and of additions made long after the days of Moses from time to time. The construction and authenticity of the documents will always be an open question. But the unity of "the law" as a whole becomes more and more evident when seen in relation to the growth of the soul, and points clearly to the supervision, even to the very letter, of an Author who gave the law as man's infallible guide to Himself as "the way, the truth and the life." "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." (John 5:46.) The soldiers parted the outer garments of the Lord, and cast lots for its parts. The inner garment was without seam, woven from the top throughout. One piece: the law of charity.

Volume II:

"The Former Prophets"

Joshua

"The Love of the Neighbor"

Bible critics are generally agreed that the placing of the book of Joshua as the first of the "Former Prophets" in the Old Testament canon is arbitrary and artificial. The external evidence upholds their contention that the Hexateuch, and not the Pentateuch, is the first division of the Scriptures. There is no mention of any prophet in the book of Joshua, and its content and literary structure connect it rather with the books of the law, describing "the final stage in the history of the Origins of the Hebrew nation." The internal evidence, however, clearly shews the hand of Providence in classifying the book as the first of the prophets.

The primary meaning of the word "prophet" is one who "speaks for" God. The common use of the word for one who foretells events is secondary. Joshua was a military commander, but his leadership spoke the word of God for action, and through action. The very first verse of prophecy commissioned him to speak the word of command as given from the Lord. And Joshua commanded the officers and the people throughout the campaign that followed as instructed by the Lord. Joshua spoke for God.

This opens the role of the prophet in translating "the law" in theory into the law in practice to establish equal rights for all men, or, save the state. "Joshua" means the same as "Jesus", namely, "He shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21.) What is required of us to do justly by our neighbor is a vexed question, a never ending discussion of conflicting interests and circumstances with perpetual variation, to make our adjustments for the common weal. Therefore, perpetual warfare is the order of the day. "The former prophets" teach us the underlying principles by which our judgments should be formed in our daily efforts to set up a new order in society. What needs to be done is simple and easy at first, but becomes more complex and difficult as we approach the heart of life's problems. "Self-examination discovers little when it is restricted to actions; more, when it extends to thoughts and intentions; and all, when it scrutinizes what the man considers or does not consider to be sins. For a man does whatever he makes allowable in himself." (C. 5.)

Courage Indispensable to Life

Chapter 1. The curtain now rises upon scenes that portray the conquest of the inner part of our lost inheritance-the conquest of the inordinate love of self and the world that has alienated us from God and man, and turned the world into a bedlam. We stand on the threshold of life's battlefield. Ours is the promise, "Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon, that have I given you, as I said unto Moses." The Lord guarantees the restoration of heaven upon earth wherever we stand firm for the right as He gives us to see it. "The strait and narrow way" lies right ahead. We must not turn from it either to the right or to the left. The enemy will contest our right of way to the bitter end. We may suffer defeat for lack of courage, but live to learn, and to fight better. The prospect is inspiring, and is attainable. Are we equal to it? "With God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26.) "Only be strong and of a good courage."

Preliminary Survey

2. The campaign opened with a reconnaissance. Joshua sent spies into the land to discover the strength and the weakness of the enemy's position. In Christian warfare we must look first for good wherever it may be found, to protect and to save it. "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John. 3:17.) This outlook explains the meaning of the scarlet thread in the window of Rahab's house on the wall of Jericho. Rahab, the harlot, represents all there is of the church, or religion, on the eve of regeneration. We are weak, fallen mortals. The only thing we have to boast of is a secret joy in the teachings of religion with their promise of redemption. Rahab hid the spies on the roof of her house. The Lord wills that every man should receive heaven in his own way, no matter howsoever far he may have fallen from grace. Otherwise, heaven would not be heaven to him. His individuality is inviolable. He shall decide for himself what is evil, and how he intends to deal with it. He also shall freely conclude that the will, the understanding, and the power to do good are from the Lord alone.

Reverence for the Word

3. As soon as the resolution to serve and not to be served is formed, we face the current thought of the world both within and without, which is decidedly anti-religious. "I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (Jon. 17:14, 15.) The river Jordan in flood presented an insurmountable barrier to the invaders, and afforded protection to the enemy within. This represents one of the first or most obvious obstructions to the unworldly. How can we live in the world, and hold our own against the prevailing licentious thought of the world in its mad rush for wealth, or power, or pleasure, that is, at the specific point where the world's thought touches our particular tastes and interests? Unruly thoughts on the rampage conceal much that is worse in the background. The tumultuous stream of thought, however, can be cut off at any moment, when we humbly and reverently approach the Lord in his Word with a sincere desire to learn his will, and do it. The people followed the ark at a respectful distance, and the moment the feet of the priests bearing it touched the waters, they were cut off, and the way opened into the promised land.

4. The stones taken from the bed of the river, and the stones placed where the feet of those who bore the ark stood are a memorial of the experience. We may not forget the fact that the Word gives definition to this common introduction to the heavenly life. The first stand for the spiritual life makes good our profession of the Lord as our Savior. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lu. 9:62.) "On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life." That fear is not a dread. The personal touch now established with the Savior engenders a fear of doing aught to displease Him, or prove unworthy of his confidence, or bring dishonor on the Christian name we bear. It is "the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. 111:10.) The waters of Jordan now represent the truths by which we are introduced into the heavenly life. Our confession of loyalty at the opening of the new life prepares us for all the trials that are to follow.

5. Circumcision, like baptism, implies a consecration to the purification of the inner life - "the circumcision of the heart." (Deut. 30:6.) The celebration of the passover commemorates the deliverance from Egypt. The manna ceased and the people ate of the corn of the land for the first time. It means the first taste of "the bread of life." This is followed by Joshua's vision of the angel with the drawn sword in his hand, "the Captain of the host of the Lord." We stand on holy ground. The life of religion has begun in earnest.

Selfishness Is Indefensible

6. "Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel, none went out, and none came in." Joshua compassed the walls of the city once every day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. It is an extraordinary procedure staged to tell us how the love of self is brought into subordination to the love of God. Continual and intensive self-examination in the light of the Word is necessary to see and to condemn the mean and unjustifiable ways in which self-interest resists interference. The love of self blinds man to every evil in himself, so that he cannot see himself as others see him, much less as God sees him. Everyone is queer, except self. We are not as other people are, and no one dare challenge it! When under fire we are always in the right! Not quite! We begin to see that the thoughts in defence of self-interest are untenable. We become conscious that there is nothing "more restless at heart, more frequently indignant, and more grievously angered than the love of self." (P. 250.) To see this in relation to specific evils to which we are prone, to admit unreservedly that we are in the wrong, and call upon the Lord for help, places the Lord at the centre and the love of self at the circumference for the time being. There is no fighting in this experience, only a cry of shame at the outrage of unrequited love as we capitulate, and surrender ourselves to the mercy of the Lord. just as we are, without one plea, we take tip life with the determination to use whatever gifts we possess in the disinterested service of our fellowmen. We are expected to be true to ourselves. "Rahab dwells in Israel to this day." But special privilege for self shall be anathema henceforth. The city of Jericho may never be rebuilt.

So Also Worldliness

7. To this we say Amen. Nevertheless, self-surrender is sometimes followed by an elation not altogether free from pride. Conceit is in evidence when we minimize the power of the enemy, or temporize with evil. The walled city of Ai represents our worldly interests on the defensive. The name of the city means "a heap of ruins," which is strikingly descriptive of mammon worship. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." (Eccles. 1 :2.) Covetousness stole a march on us in youth before we knew the nature of it, and when now brought into the light, we learn to our dismay how strong a hold it has upon us, and how seriously it impairs our love of the neighbor. The Lord is present in all the processes of our analysis, and shows us just why we fail in temptation, when yet our intentions are the best. To meet the world again successfully our pride must be brought low, and greed rejected without pity. Achan, with his household and stolen goods, were stoned and burned in the valley of Achor.

8. The humiliation of our first defeat in meeting the love of the world within leads to the adoption of a new method of attack. In the picture Joshua drew the enemy from Ai by stratagem, and the ambush entered the undefended city, and set fire to it. Suppose we give our lust for gain a free rein in thought, and mark carefully the foolish extremes to which it leads us. Behold what we would do if we had unlimited means!

The pleasures we would indulge in, if free from restraint! The evil is then in the open without defence. The heavenly influences behind, or within, are then at hand to condemn. The outstretched spear in the hand of Joshua is the symbol of the truth upheld in subordinating the love of the world to the love of the neighbor. The victory is the Lord's. We give Him the thanks. Joshua built all altar in mount Ebal, and there wrote the law upon stones in the presence of the people. The knowledge of our responsibilities in life is one thing, the acknowledgment of them is quite another. "When there is charity, then there is acknowledgment, and then there is faith." (A. 654.) When we have seen the love of self and the love of the world in ourselves, and modified their power over us by a definite change of heart and life, we are ready to meet life's responsibilities with all expectation of a steady gain in morale and self-respect.

An Old Habit Revived

9. A pause in the campaign afforded an opportunity to receive visitors. The Hivites, neighbors of Abraham, appeared as strangers from a great distance, and desired to enter into a covenant with Joshua, which was duly ratified.

These Hivites represent a live interest in early childhood, long outgrown, but now necessary to our future growth. This interest lay in the stories in the Bible, and the simple lessons of life in them. That was a lost love even before we entered our teens. When that long lost interest is revived the Bible appears to be entirely foreign to our modern life. It is still ancient history, even though we now have an inkling that it contains a deeper meaning. It is like old sacks, old wine bottles, old shoes, old garments, dry and mouldy bread. It supplies nothing to feed or clothe the soul, or to stimulate new life. The Old Testament is altogether out of date. How could it be otherwise! The new birth has just taken place. We read the Word from a sense of duty, but it is beyond our understanding. And yet, here and there, we find passages with a message that warms the heart and clarifies the thought, serving to strengthen the newborn spirit of religion. When Joshua discovered that the Hivites were "neighbors," and not strangers, he made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the altar of the Lord. The child-love of the Bible stories still holds its place in later life. The reading of the Bible whether we understand its deeper meaning or not is a valuable asset in the worship of the Lord, though of the humblest order. It contributes its quota to the warmth and cleanliness in the day's work.

Living in the Light

10. This feeble start in the living worship of the Lord in his Word is immediately put to the test. The men of Gibeon (the home of the Hivites who had just made peace with Israel) called upon Joshua to save them from the King of Jerusalem, and other kings of the south, who gathered against them. Shall the heart abandon life's venture in religion, because it looks idealistic, with little or nothing to substantiate it? That is the issue. There is little fighting in the conflict. Most of the arguments against our new-found faith fall flat, being wholly out of sympathy with, and therefore lacking understanding of our great quest. Hailstones killed more of the enemy than the sword. And the sun stood still at the command of Joshua. A wonderful light sustains us in facing the disapproval of the world when religion first grips the heart. "There was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel." The king of Jerusalem at the head of the enemy was defeated. The worship of the Lord in his

Word is fixed in the heart. It is a far cry, however, to the capture of Jerusalem by David, and the building of the temple there. The contemplation of the significance of this future triumph is most reassuring. The social order will be altogether different many generations hence, thank God! We must be satisfied to take one step at a time.

11. The first test of the heart is simultaneously accompanied by a test of reason in support of it. The uprising in the north was a direct consequence of the conquest of the south. When the heart is set on the life of religion argument against it is of little avail. But, when our convictions are called in question, we must meet argument with argument. Our convictions are not chiefly our theological beliefs, but religion in life. The world cares less today about a man's creed, but takes seriously differences on vital questions. "The life of religion is to do good." We ought to have sound reasons for the course of action we now follow, or advocate-reasons drawn from the teachings of the Word of God. The enemy in the north was equipped with horses and chariots. Israel was commanded to hough these horses, and burn these chariots, to conquer the north country. The horse looks to its rider for direction, and responds to the slightest touch of the reins. Even so the understanding is subject to the will. We understand the law aright, when a disinterested motive is in the saddle; but misunderstand it, when self interest holds the reins. A great primary issue is before us. Two sets of reasons pro and con are hard at it in the mind; one for self-indulgence, the other for the right. We must decide where we stand. Every decision for the right breaks the habit of interpreting the law to suit ourselves, and rejects the inferences that justify wrongdoing with augmented zeal. This is the practical significance of houghing the horses and burning the chariots. Have we the courage to put an end to evil thinking and planning, when squarely up against it in ourselves? Even to have lodged an indignant protest against it is not without its influence for good upon us. We enter into possession of another bit of heaven so far as our opposition and effort to control evil are sincere, and have at the same time taken out of us a little of that spirit inseparable from immaturity that knows all, and has nothing further to learn. After conquering the north Joshua cut off some of the Anakim, or giants, in the land.

12. We have gained a foothold in the kingdom of heaven. The commandments to love the Lord first and our neighbor as ourselves have place in our hearts and lives. We have reached the point where by sound processes of reasoning, we have dethroned certain false ideas that had a dominating influence over our actions. The kings smitten on both sides of the Jordan represent this initial spiritual progress.

Arranging the Home

13-19. It is a very common impression, however, that heaven is won as soon as the first objective is attained. People who have overcome a bad habit, and surrendered their lives to the Lord, are apt to rest on their oars. They have exhausted their energy in their first effort, and decide to take life easy. In the language of Scripture there remains much territory yet to be possessed, but "Joshua was old and stricken in years." The power to save is available, but the need scant. What has been gained, however, must be put in order. Settlement in the land followed. Two and a half tribes had already received their inheritance as fixed by lot before Moses died. The other nine and a half tribes took their portions by lot before Joshua died. The assignments were all made under the direction of the Lord. And so the Lord establishes heaven on earth again, coordinating the effort of each individual in relation to every other individual, so that all

may act as unit in the upbuilding of his kingdom on earth, as a basis for the heavens above. We rise or fall together. The foundation must be sure. "If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3.)

Much may be learned from the disposition of the tribes in the land, and the names of the places in each lot. It is significant of the interrelationship of those who belong to the Lord's living church—the invisible church—in the world. It assumes the human form from the Divine Humanity of the Lord as men "put away the evil of their doings from before his eyes," and receive his Spirit in their hearts and lives.

At the centre of the life of religion is the acknowledgment of the Lord as our Exemplar. The children of Israel set up the tabernacle at Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim. Shiloh means "peace." The tabernacle placed there represents the Lord operating in the hearts of his people to establish peace on earth through a new understanding of his Word, (Ephraim), and faithful obedience to it. The enemy was still in the land, a thorn in the flesh. The subsequent story of perpetual warfare and captivity is our guide in the conflict that cannot stop short of complete homogeneity—a country without an enemy, a character free from sin, the Lord the heart and soul of all within the Holy City, and everything that defileth without its walls.

20, 21. The text again speaks of the cities of refuge, and the lot of the Levites. The Lord's saving grace has an abiding place in the heart, yet we are far from perfect. We do and say things to the hurt of others in ignorance. When the Spirit convicts us of sin, we suffer. The Lord is our refuge. Open confession and an appeal for strength to face the light, and regain freedom, brings the help that avails for salvation. The Lord's love enters into all human relationships to unify and strengthen the spiritual life in the church.

A United Front

22. An act, which threatened to break the unity of the tribes and lead to war, resulted in greater solidarity after an open explanation. The tribes beyond Jordan, returning to their home with Joshua's blessing, built an altar before crossing the river. This was misinterpreted as a repudiation of the worship of the Lord in Shiloh. Contrariwise, it was intended to obliterate the thought of the Jordan as any barrier to the unity of the tribes. The altar was dedicated as a witness to it by all. Transjordan represents the outward plane of living, and Palestine the inner plane. The outer life and the inner life must be at one. We may not appear different before men than we appear before God, or desire to appear before Him. The great objective in life is to become homogeneous, of one nature within and without. "Man is so formed from creation that interior thought should make one with exterior by correspondence. Every man has interior thought and exterior thought. They are distinct from each other. Thought implies will, for thought is from the will, since no man can think without will." (H. 499.) This explains why one-half the tribe of Manasseh had a lot within and the other half without the land. Manasseh represents the new will, which must be one in both the inner and the outer life. "The will makes the man, and thought only so far as it proceeds from the will. Deeds or works proceed from both. The will, or love, is the man himself." (H. 474.) The inner and the outer must serve the same Lord and God. The outside and inside of the cup and the platter must be clean in his sight. "He alone is a man who is interiorly what he wishes to seem to others to be. One's own intelligence can establish the human form in externals only; but the Divine Providence establishes that form in the internals, and through these in the externals; and when it has been so established man does not merely appear to be a man, but he is a man." (P. 298.)

23. The aged Joshua warns the people against commixture with the enemies in the land, or the worship of their gods. The first enthusiastic effort to do the Lord's will has spent itself. The consciousness of the Lord's saving grace in the experience is waning. The enemy is close at hand ready to take advantage of the first sign of weakness. Courage is needed to maintain our integrity. To fail now will incur greater degradation.

24. The repetition of the recent experiences of the tribes in the wilderness and their recent conquest of the land seems to be unnecessary and superfluous. But the recollection of past favors was made to soften the heart to accept Joshua's last words of criticism and advice without resentment. "Now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel." The people promised obedience, and the solemn covenant was renewed. Children are often remiss and forgetful. The memory of what their parents have done for them is short and feeble. This is more marked in our appreciation of all that the Lord has done for us. It is only as we go over it again and again in the light of recent experience that we begin to understand, and are prepared to see what thankless creatures we are. We furtively worship other gods: it is time we did something about it. Joshua dies, and is buried in Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim. And Joseph's bones are buried in Jacob's lot in Shechem. The Spirit of the Lord in our first experiences of his saving grace lives beneath and within all our future undertakings. And the memory of previous experiences in which his guiding hand was present, in spite of our disposition to frustrate it, lives beneath and within all trials to trust in the Lord's Providence. Together they contribute to a new and clearer understanding of God's Word. Joshua and Joseph were both buried in Ephraim's lot. Ephraim represents "the intellectual of the Church." (E. 391, A. 2709.)

Judges

Forming Principles for Life

Chapter 1. A growing understanding of the Word increases our knowledge of our duty to God and man. It reveals many unsightly evils within contrary to the principles of religion. Conscience demands action. This is the substance of the picture before us. After seven years fighting the children of Israel gained a firm footing in the land. The enemies both within and without the land have gained in numbers in peacetime, but are already restive and menacing. The Canaanites—"lowlanders"—who dwelt mainly on the coast and in the Jordan valley were the first to attack. They represent anti-social habits acquired in childhood that are a part of our nature, and have long been tolerated as fixtures. They are there to test our professed love of God and obedience to his will, which Judah and Simeon represent. To cut off the thumbs and great toes of Adonibezek was brutal. We forget the brutality when we see that it is descriptive of the manner in which bad habits may be broken up. The tendency to do evil, or to have our own way, is put out of commission when severed from evil thoughts and intentions. While thus engaged in cutting out mean practices we clear our records of them, and the Scriptures become a fountain of living truth for the soul in its new relationship with God and the world. Othniel won Caleb's daughter Achsah by capturing Keriathsepher—"the city of books"—and Achsah received from her father land with upper and nether springs in it. This in preparation for major conflicts soon to follow.

Strengthening Our Morale

2. We attack evil at first, imagining that its outward symptoms are all there is of it. We make a slight impression upon its influence over us only to gain our first glimpse of the content, which assumes larger and more serious proportions the more we are prepared to meet it. Joshua and his generation "were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." With the loss of morale in giving way to loose habits of living the enemy seized the opportunity to tyrannize Israel. The enemy was there "to prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, or not." Whenever Israel cried unto the Lord, He "raised them up saviors, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies." There were twelve judges, or "saviors," six minor and six major. These "twelve" are types of all judgments formed in combating evil in the earlier stages of regeneration. The sectional conflicts under the judges were a preparation for the national conflicts under the kings later.

3. Israel was first placed under servitude to the king of Mesopotamia. We early become aware of our tendency to justify evils in ourselves that we condemn in others. It is enough at first that we see our inconsistency, and clear the conscience for the time being with a hearty confession of it, and a plea for mercy. Moab next enslaved Israel, until Ehud assassinated their king, and killed many of his people at the fords of Jordan. Moab, son of Lot, represents the love of pleasure. This is a first contact with excesses that should be prohibited to prevent serious demoralisation. A touch of the spirit of pride in our attainments (Philistia) demands humiliation.

Hasty Judgments Revised

4. The next enemy to oppress Israel was Jabin, King of Canaan. This is a return of the enemy Joshua defeated in taking possession of the northern section of the land. The same enemy puts in an appearance many times before we know it thoroughly, and learn how to keep it under control. Here Deborah and Barak defeated Jabin's army, and Jael nailed the king to the ground in her tent. Again, our understanding of the Word is put to the test in determining the falsity of a principle that has long justified selfish behavior. After much close reasoning we finally admit that we are in the wrong. And when we are led to consider intimately the underlying principle that accounts for our unseemly conduct, and see its falsity, we unhesitatingly condemn it, wondering why we had so long temporised with it.

5. The song of Deborah and Barak expresses joy in victory. It reflects credit on the tribes who assisted in the defeat of the Canaanites, and discredit on the tribes that did not come to their help. It lauds Jael for loyalty. Great is our elation over our conversion to the truth. The non-cooperative tribes imply reservations in the background that have yet to be cleared up. Later experiences will bring them into the light for judgment. Apart from that our conviction is clear, and the error of our ways condemned without compromise.

And Questionable Impressions

6. Then came the Midianites, a nomadic tribe frequenting the region beyond Jordan. Like grasshoppers for multitude they despoiled the meadows at harvest time. Even so, superficial and unsound impressions of social conditions that sway public opinion destroy good will, and engender fears. The children of Israel hid in dens and caves. An angel was sent to Gideon, the Manassite, when "threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." We secretly sift the rumors to separate the good from the bad. ("The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.") We readily distinguish between that which is useful and that which is useless, but dare not always take it into the open. Gideon's offering (a plea for strength) is charged with virtue at the touch of the angel's staff. He then built an altar to Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord of peace", and destroyed Baal's altar in his father's household. The Midianites were close at hand. Gideon gathered the tribes for battle, but sought a favorable omen. This elaborate preparation reveals the demands that must be met before the mind is clear and the arm strong for judgment. How shall we proceed? A charitable demeanor (sheep's clothing), truth that makes for peace (the dew), and an open heart (the dry ground), ensure success; while dry or severe criticism and apathy (a dry fleece and wet earth) presage failure.

7. Any solid body of men of action under competent leadership will surely carry conviction in a campaign for social betterment when they fight zealously in the light of truth from the opened Word, (the trumpet blast and uncovered torch). Gideon's army numbered 32,000, but 300 were sufficient to overcome the enemy. The esprit de corps is more important than numbers. The well of Harod represents the Word. Its waters are the practical truths that quench the "thirst after righteousness." Those who drink of the waters with an intense eagerness to put them into practice can never be downed. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," in the context, is an invincible slogan in Christian warfare against corrupt politics, or propagandism hurtful to the community, whether it results in immediate reforms, or not.

Autocracy or Democracy?

8. Gideon healed the wounded feelings of the Ephraimites by acknowledging the special value of their services in killing the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, in the land. The new understanding of the Word (Ephraim) is invaluable in exposing the falsity in the leading arguments for the opposition. But the kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and their hosts, were still at large in their own territory on the other side Jordan. After defeating them Gideon punished the men of Succoth and Penueel for refusing help. They who profit by social injustices and stand in the way of reforms-the "die-hards "-cannot escape the consequences. Passive resistance and unhappiness are inseparable. "Men do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles." (Matt. 7:16.) Israel wanted Gideon to, rule over them, but Gideon said, "The Lord shall rule over you." Gideon himself made an ephod of gold taken from the Midianites, and the people worshipped it. They were not ready for a king. Kings follow judges. The practice of the law must be applied in segments of the community, before we are prepared to extend its application to the whole-the nation and the world.

9. The effort to extend the operation of the law to social injustices begets many projects for the solution of them. (Gideon's sons). One of these, the rule of a dictator, presents itself as the most obvious key to the situation. Autocracy promises to bear quicker results than the rule of love to God, or the neighbor, or simple-kindness-the olive, the vine, or the fig tree. Abimelech represents this illegitimate form of government, autocracy. He was not a judge, or "savior", but a pseudo-king. Violence has no remedy for injustice. A drastic suppression of liberty and thought only breeds vindictiveness which ultimately effectuates its own destruction. A boiler without a safety valve must explode when the pressure exceeds the resistance.

10. To the open-eyed experience teaches the pressing need of reciprocity and probity in all human relationships. This is represented by the appointment of Tola, a judge in Issachar, and Jair, a judge in Gilead. The effort to get people together to fulfil their engagements to each other honorably arouses opposition from those who spurn outward changes as well as inward changes in life. Israel is in the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites.

Self-Surrender

11. Israel must first settle its account with the Ammonites. The stake in the conflict is Jephthah's daughter, which means a change in the inner life. If Jephthah wins, the home is a different home. To illustrate the point: we have tried prohibition as a cure for intemperance, and found it to be unworkable. How then shall we solve the problem? There seems to be no alternative to that of personal regeneration. Each man shall draw the line between use and abuse, or for total abstinence for himself. There are many who may not safely touch drink. For them "it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell." (Mk. 9:43.) Take the case of one who has fallen for drink, and determined to cut it out. He must count on paying the price for victory-sacrifice one of the members of his own household, the first to appear after conflict, self-confidence. Every inebriate knows when he has had enough! But, does he ever stop when he has reached that point? No, never, so long as he feels certain that he knows how to take care of himself 1 No man dare question it! Not until he is ready, however, to 'surrender his will to the will of God can he ever expect to triumph in temptation. The changed heart must precede a changed life. The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter after the conflict is only the completion of the vow made in the beginning.

"The more thou putttest in the Lord thy trust
The stronger shall thine arm for service be."
-D. H. Howard

12. Ephraim is piqued because the Gileadites left them out in their war with the Ammonites. A changed heart, signified by the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, necessitates a changed mind, a new understanding of the Word (Ephraim). We naturally incline to interpret the Scripture literally. At first we take even the spiritual sense literally. The modification and change of that literalistic interpretation in answer to the changed heart is not effected without another conflict. Our new understanding of the Word must be purged of everything out of harmony with the spirit of the Word. The Ephraimite who could not pronounce the word Shibboleth "was slain at the passage of Jordan," that is, in passing into the land. The aspirote is the symbol of the Spirit. The Spirit of love-God's love in Christ is the key to the Scriptures, and not the abstract doctrine of correspondences. "In itself the Word is nothing but the doctrine of love to the Lord, and of charity toward the neighbor." (A. 7262.) "Anyone who lives rightly is in the spirit of the Word, whether he knows it or not. It is one thing to know the spiritual sense of the Word, but quite another to be in it." (A. 4280.) The experiences which bring forth this judgment lead to other judgments adding to the powers of reason to meet life's problems with growing certitude. Every day brings additional knowledge of variations in human behavior that test our convictions and require a modification or alteration of them in the line of progress. The three minor judges who follow Jephthah represent a development in discriminating the truth in relation to conduct that prepares for meeting one of the most insidious enemies of the spiritual life-faith without works. We may imagine that we have finally disposed of that error, when we have denounced it in unmeasured terms. Yet a dead faith without works is very much alive in these days, in ourselves too, and only needs fearless investigation to uncover its haunts for judgment.

"Faith without Works Is Dead"

13. Israel has been subject to Philistia forty years. We have long been aware of traits in our character that are questionable. We sidetracked every challenge of them, and tried to ignore them altogether. Our new understanding of the Word has gone to seed working out a purely abstract spiritual sense of it. We measure our faith by our love of it, and readiness to sacrifice everything for it. This is a dangerous form of faith alone. The angel told Manoah's wife and Manoah too that she must drink no wine, nor eat any unclean thing. The child born to her would be a Nazarite from the womb. (See Matt. 2:23.) The spiritual sense is valueless except in so far as it gives faith its life's tests from day to day. For "unless a man shun evils, nothing of his worship is good, and in like manner nothing of his works." (L. 30.) "To shun evils as sins is the Christian religion itself, and faith separate from charity is the only obstacle to its adoption." (P. 265.) The perception of this truth is from above. When conceived, brought forth and nurtured faithfully, we are prepared to meet a great enemy in ourselves to spiritual progress, or real religion.

14. The Scriptures consistently testify throughout that we can know when we are in the wrong, and overcome that wrong. Experience is equally unequivocal in its testimony that we vehemently protest against opening our book of life, and gazing fearlessly at the record against us within. The defiance displayed at the first suggestion of guilt is like the roar of a lion in the way. We are exceedingly touchy, taking violent offence at the least hint of guilt. Au contraire, it is utter folly to resist investigation. Why live under the delusion that we can hide anything from God, or get away with the least unworthy thought? Why not face the light? Samson killed the lion on his way to marry a Philistine woman. We gain much

when under criticism we mark the sudden appearance of rising indignation and resentment, silence the fierce passion, and look into the situation with equanimity. At the marriage in Timnath, Samson propounded a riddle to the Philistines which led to a separation from his wife. And its meaning for us? Experience teaches us that when we are open to conviction of sin, even in part, we find a new satisfaction, and even a delight, in upholding reasons for at least modifying corrupt habits of life. We cannot justify them as before. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

15. But new difficulties come to the surface. Most bad habits have good and evil in them. The good is used to justify procrastination in dealing with the evil. Samson returned to his wife, but her father protested that she had been given to a Philistine. In reprisal Samson destroyed their wheat crop, and vineyards and olives. Further reflection upon the persistence of evil habits leads to the further conclusion that unless the evil is separated from the good in them, it will ultimately destroy all the good in human nature. Good and evil cannot live together. Evil habits gain strength when we temporize with them, or take the line of least resistance by indulging them. Courage to resist weakens until we seem powerless to do anything. The men of Judah bind Samson, and hand him over to the Philistines. Something must be done. The jawbone of an ass that smote the Philistines signifies the use of reason to condemn further delay, and enforce action. Evil must be curbed, and we can only learn in what manner this can be done, when strained to make amends for past apathy and neglect.

16. We may need to suffer more, however, to appreciate the gravity of postponing the day of reckoning. The practice of habits which we condemn in others is adulterous. Can we justify that? The Philistines have Samson entrapped in Gaza, a walled city, but Samson carried away the gates of the city to Hebron. The wiles of the flesh get us into many a tight place, but there is always a way out, when we take the bull by the horns. There is no limit to the strength available when our duty to God is clear. This lesson is further illustrated in Samson's relationship with Delilah, (whose name means "languid, feeble, weak"), in the valley of Sorek. Three times she enticed Samson to divulge the secret of his power, and three times he deceived her. But the fourth time he succumbed to her allurements. His enemies deprived him of his eyesight, and put him in prison. To trust in knowledge, and let well enough alone, takes all the force out of the simple precepts of God's Word, blinds us to the duty before us, and destroys our freedom. The degradation due to this relapse shames us to make amends for our blindness. The child in man gives direction to a last effort to put an end to the emasculating worship of culture and wealth. No lesson learned and honestly put to service even half-heartedly is lost. Samson sacrificed his life in the temple of Dagon, but was buried in his native land. The experience is preserved in "the kingdom within." It is a bit of heaven that forms part of the background of our nature in subsequent trials.

17. We now enter the period of transition from judges to kings. Samson was the last of the twelve judges. In the days that followed him "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This does not imply that religion has been discarded. We go to church as usual, but our worship is for the most part a pleasurable recreation. Life's interest at this juncture is centered in fashioning an idol—a silver idol. Our chief delight is in a course of action that promises to bring prosperity, or fame, with, of course, the sanction of the church. The intention at least is to pursue our worldly objective on strictly honorable lines. Yes! but the benison of religion is paid for. Micah expected that the Lord would do him good, seeing he had a Levite as his priest. His priest, however, was hired. Self-interest is at the bottom of the whole scheme, as presently appears in the light.

The End Justifies the Means?

18. The Philistines were making it too hot for the Danites to hold the inheritance allotted to them. Therefore the Danites sought a home elsewhere. On the way to take possession of it, they robbed the house of Micah of its idols. Our judgment, which Dan represents, is greatly weakened by a loss of courage, and an open attempt to escape from life's responsibilities (Philistinism). Note how closely this dovetails into the description of Dan's new home by the spies. "They came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate (or, heir of restraint) in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man." It all fits in with the robbery of Micah's idols and hired priest. It is a disappointing but challenging picture of a relapse to mammon worship, choosing the broad and easy way in preference to the strait and narrow way. The golden calf set up later in Dan marks a resurgence of this same spirit. But more significant of Dan's decline is the fact that this is the first permanent breach in the nation. Barring the mention of the tribe in Ezekiel's vision (ch. 48), there is no further mention of it in the Scriptures. And John omits the name from the list of the twelve in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse.

19. The consequences of this defection-letting down on the resistance of evil-appear in the closing chapters of Judges. We fall to rise. The light shines forth out of a very dark background. The Levite represents one who is genuinely interested in the life of religion and the study of the Word, but thinks more of setting the world right, than of first setting himself right with God. The ideas to which he is wedded are mixed, partly good and partly bad. This the concubine from Bethlehem Judah, the birthplace of the Savior, represents. The church calls the union of good and evil adulterous. The concubine "played the whore against" the Levite. The hereditary tendency to the evil overruled all scruples, however, on the ground that the end justifies the means. Her father brought the two together again. The end is good-to save, to better the conditions of living. The Levite and his concubine were on their way to the house of God, but by sunset they had only reached Gibeah. There the concubine was humbled by the Benjamites to the point of death. Good intentions sometimes pave the way to hell. "Benjamin was the last of the twelve sons of Israel, and signifies the Word in the ultimate sense which is natural. He signifies also the last thing of the Church and of Heaven, the conjunction of good and truth in the natural man, and through good conjunction with the spiritual man; for all that is good in the natural man flows in from the spiritual man, that is, through the spiritual man from the Lord." (E. 449.) The corruption of this spirit in an effort to justify the means by the end destroys the power of the letter of the Word, the good life in man, and the point of contact with heaven and the Lord. It takes the bottom out of everything worth living for. Everything rests upon separating good from evil, truth from falsity in speech and action. "Where conscience is relaxed there is no medium through which the Lord may inflow." (A. 1835.) It is astonishing to find how universal is the weakness in men to justify vicious practices by the end—a good intention. Being fundamentally wrong, threatening the entire breakdown of character, it demands the united effort of everything of sterling value in character-faith, obedience, worship, intelligence, courage, love of God and man, etc, -to rectify this great wrong.

20. Benjamin -"son of the right hand"-represents the power of the truth motivated by love. It is not surprising, therefore, that Benjamin's chief defenders against the attack of all their brethren were "seven hundred left-handed men, every one of whom could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss." The left hand signifies the power of intellectuality, and the stones signify arguments in self-defence. The good of one's country justifies all brutality in war, and corruption in party politics! The good of children justifies the cruelty of parents, or teachers ! The good of the state justifies ill treatment of criminals! And the church

has much brutality to answer for that was credited, or debited, to the good of man's soul. So keen is the logic of those who see only their objective-the good of others-that the appeal of religion falls short on two counts. It cannot be proved that the heart is wrong. Neither can it be proved that the head is at fault. Only on the third count can religion score a victory, and that is on the question of life. The life-product is ruinous to the personal and public welfare.

21. The Benjamites were so thoroughly decimated that only six hundred men, who fled to the rock Rimmon in Judah, were left alive. For them four hundred virgins from Jabesh Gilead, beyond Jordan, were provided to save the tribe from extinction. The spiritual, enlisting one's whole being in doing right, because it is right, reopens the way for the inception of the kingdom of the Lord. Hereafter the power and the meaning of the Scriptures is determined by its practicability, The stock of Benjamin is now mothered by the Gileadites. Gilead signifies "the first good, which is that of the senses of the body; for it is the good or the pleasure of these into which the man who is being regenerated is first of all initiated." (A. 4117.) More and more the growth of the Church will be dependent upon her ability to shew plainly the bearing of revelation upon the daily life of her people. Abstract doctrine will always have a place in the Church. But the power of the Church for good in the world will be measured by her ability to lead men to greater freedom, and peace, and joy. "In these days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." To all appearance we are the same today individually and collectively as we were yesterday and the day before. We have learned nothing from experience. That is the outside, most disappointing and discouraging. Such is the situation because we insist that the cause is on the surface, and not at the centre in our own hearts. It takes a lifetime to learn that from experience.

I Samuel

"Asked of God"

Chapter 1. We have all been brought up with a fair idea of our duty to God and man. That is the burden of "the Law." We have made sporadic efforts to regulate a few of the outstanding defects in our character, fulfilling the spirit of Joshua and Judges. This beginning in the work of regeneration, however, has only opened our eyes to the task of bringing order out of chaos. "There is no king in Israel," no final authority, no organised self-government within enforcing the law in relation to the causes of all our troubles. The love of the law exists (Elkanah), and a few definite proposals for reform (Peninnah's children), which are somewhat overrated as cure-alls. But we have not reached the root of the problem. The life of religion is sadly corrupted (Eli's sons are a discredit to the nation), and we have not recovered from our apostasy, or failure to stand for the right when under fire (The Philistines forced Dan to abandon their allotted home in the land). The situation is very disquieting. We feel it acutely, and pray that by God's grace (Hannah), we may know the truth that will make us free. The church as an institution is apathetic, and misunderstands our concern (Eli thought Hannah was drunk). The Lord knows and answers prayer. Hannah called her child Samuel, because, as she said, "I have asked him of the Lord." When the conception from the Lord has been born and weaned, it is dedicated to the service of the Lord.

2, 3. By the grace of God we are convinced that we have the remedy for the disorganised state of society. Hannah's song gives thanks for the hope centered in the ministration of her son. The old order will work out its own destruction, and a new order will be set up under the ministry of Samuel. So Samuel "grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet to the Lord." When facing life's problems at the beginning of the regenerate life, not knowing what best to do, the Lord is present and enlightens conscience to meet the approaching course in human affairs from day to day. We come under the guidance of the Lord when asked in sincerity. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105.) Samuel opened the door of the house of the Lord, and rekindled the lamp of God in the temple daily.

Belief without Action

4. Eli and his sons perished when the Philistines defeated Israel, and captured the ark of the covenant, "the glory of Israel." We suffer a sore humiliation when we mark how we take pride in our knowledge of the teachings of religion, but fail in the practice of them. We procrastinate, we place our trust in faith alone, and fail to "humble ourselves to walk with God."

5. What is the result? The ark of the covenant was placed in the house of Dagon. These two could not be together in the same house. Dagon went to pieces before the ark, leaving only the stump, the tail of a fish, where the legs of the man ought to have been. The commandments condemn the worship of learning without living. To know the way and not walk therein results in the defilement of character and our environment. The Philistines were plagued with hemorrhoids and mice.

Note: Dr. A. H. Sayce, Assyriologist, says that Dagon is not the fish god, but the god of agriculture. If this be correct, it only shifts the representation from the sea to the land. The stump, "Dagon", takes the place of the legs of a man, be it a fish's tail or a corn stalk.

6. What can be done to heal the plague? Golden images of the hemorrhoids and mice were placed in a new cart drawn by milch kine that had never been under the yoke. Our longing to be rid of the wrong in our nature, and to "walk in the law of the Lord," -both new to us-must be placed at the disposal of the Spirit of the Lord, and the Covenant is again on its way to its rightful place in our hearts.. Lowing in protest against leaving their young, the kine proceeded on their way. How hard it is to bend our wills to the Divine Will, when we have even partially given way to the habit of indolence and indifference to our obligations to God! Our repentance (the trespass offering borne in the new cart) is a painful experience. It is also attended with danger. It is folly to peer into the ways of Providence in the permission of evil. "No man can see God and live." The law in man's keeping is hidden in a casket. It is enough that we obey the plain obvious meaning that appears to us in the letter to start with, without further question. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29.)

7. The ark of the covenant remained at Kirjath Jearim twenty years. We hear no more of the tabernacle at Shiloh. Israel was in the power, or dread fear, of the Philistines. Our unwillingness to take any further decisive steps in changing our old bad habits of life is very decided. We are consequently in a most unhappy frame of mind. Meanwhile we proceed to strengthen our judgments in our daily contacts with others, but go no further. Samuel judged Israel in Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh and Ramah. This is a preparation for what is to follow.

Back to the Commandments

8. Under the leadership of Joshua and the twelve judges Israel gained a firm foothold in their lost inheritance, until the Philistines dislodged Dan, put an end to the house of Eli, and captured the ark of the covenant. The priestly rule of Samuel, the heart rent in penance, brought the commandments again into the field of action. But, this broken and contrite heart, while insufficient to lead us out of all our troubles, is a necessary precursor to the formation and the development of the kingdom now to follow, from start to finish. The priest appoints and consecrates the king, and then passes into the background, while the king occupies the foreground. (A. C. 8770.) Love is ever the Power behind the throne to marshal all the resources in man to establish the reign of law—God's law—in the world.

9. We now enter a third phase of the regenerate life, the reign of law. Worship in the tabernacle-the symbol of the home life in tents in most ancient times-has ended. Worship in the temple—symbol of home life in cities in ancient times is about to take its place. We face disorder in the world, and ask the question, Why so much crime, poverty, hunger, dirt, unemployment, sickness, and so on? Why? Saul is in search of his father's asses, and seeks the help of the seer, Samuel, for an answer. For us it means that we desire to know the reason, and what the Church has to say about it. Samuel told Saul to forget about the asses, which had been found. Something more important is required of him. The church calls first for action in protecting the innocent, and caring for those who are in trouble. First aid requires administration of the law, the letter of the law, which Saul represents.

The Letter of the Law

10. Saul was anointed king for his commanding physical appearance. "He was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward." This is conformable to his representation, the majesty of the law. Those who administer the letter of the law have little or no concern with the causes of the world's disorders. Causation belongs to the realm of the spirit. This is the significance of the testimony of the two at the tomb of the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. The gift of the three "going up to God to Bethel" specifies the contribution of religion to the administration of the letter of the law which Saul represents. This relates to the needs of the body, and not of the spirit. The paramount service of the letter of the law to man lies in restraining evil protecting the innocent, and providing for the unfortunate. The courts of law, and even the army have an important function in upholding human rights that cannot be gainsaid, and we rightfully look to them for the preservation of order in society. King Saul ranks among the prophets, or those who speak for God. Some doubt the efficacy of force, others reject it, or oppose it, but common sense recognises the authority of the letter of the law. "God save the king."

11. The breakdown of the law today is very general, and is due for the most part to the violation of the law by groups more than by individuals. Of course there are always leaders in the group-the corporation, trust, merger, machine, party, or gang in business, or in politics, but these leaders gain their power through the willing compliance and cooperation of good-natured partners and associates who are too weak to resist group pressure, and lend aid in violation of the law to the great injury of others. This common evil of giving consent to evil doing under group pressure is represented by the Ammonites investing Jabesh Gilead, threatening to sack the city, and put out the right eyes of its inhabitants. The name of their king, Nahash, meaning "serpent", betokens the subtlety of the temptation that destroys the power of seeing the wrong by which they profit at the expense of their neighbor. The injustice calls for redress at the hands of the body politic. Saul hewed a yoke of oxen and sent the pieces to the tribes with a call to arms. The battle routed the enemy so that of the remnant that escaped death not two were left together. The expose, or trial, broke down the defense so completely that there was not a single argument left to palliate the offense.

12. Samuel's testimony to his integrity, and his reminder of the Lord's favors to his people, present the selfless side of our nature, thankful for all life's blessings. The people said Amen to all that Samuel had to say. In contrast to this, however, there appears a selfish and worldly disposition badly in need of discipline. In proof! Stop just a moment, count again your blessings (wheat harvest time), and hear with awe a voice smiting conscience on account of the abuse of many of God's blessings. You resolve to do better. Life ahead will be harder for you. The thunder and rain called forth by Samuel disclosed the sin of the people in asking for a king, The king will lay down the law to be obeyed, and overcome sin. The heart is still the prime mover within all. Samuel promises to pray for the people, and teach them the good and right way. "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." Disloyalty to the truth as God gives us to see it will end the kingdom.

The Spirit in the Letter

13. The letter of the law is most effective in dealing with external evils in violation of it. Saul alone completely vanquished the Ammonites on the farther side of Jordan. He was, however, unable alone to defeat the enemy in the land. Jonathan, his son, now appears on the scene. He represents the letter of

the law through which the spirit shines. The letter without the spirit bears the peremptory command "Thou shalt not." The spirit is transparent in the letter when we hear the words of Jesus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Christianity is more than a mode of worship, or a profession of faith. It is a mode of living with mercy as the heart and soul of it. This may be applied in interpreting the picture of Jonathan smiting the Philistine garrison. Saul took credit for it, and offered a sacrifice in the absence of Samuel, to placate the Lord, for the people had scattered through fear of the Philistines. Faith in God requires immediate conflict with evil when it puts in an appearance. When confronted by evil, however, we are inclined to evade responsibility. We substitute ritual for action, a creed for a living faith. We may sharpen our profession of faith, yet do nothing further about it.

14. Jonathan smote the Philistine garrison a second time, after the invitation to "come up, and we will shew you a thing." Pride in what we know is a sure sign of weakness. The battle was on. Saul participated, and decreed that no one should eat till the enemy had been fully beaten. Jonathan tasted honey, and was enlightened. Saul thought the victory incomplete, and adhered to the letter of his edict. Jonathan must die. Saul could not see above and beyond the sacrifice. The people saw the unmercifulness of it, and saved Jonathan. This marks the transition from loyalty to the letter of the law to a higher type of loyalty to the spirit of the law. We cannot wholly set aside the letter of the law yet in dealing with a number of human frailties of an external order. Saul vexed other enemies on the other side of the Jordan.

15. Then Samuel commissioned Saul to exterminate the Amalekites, even the babes and sucklings. Saul obeyed orders, but spared the best of the flocks, and cattle, and Agag, the king, not out of mercy, but for self-exaltation. The people were sacrificing in honor of the victory, when Samuel appeared. How searching the words—"When thou wast little in thine own sight, the Lord anointed thee king over Israel. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." No compromise can be made with a spirit of evil-doing that assails us when tired and discouraged, and attacks in the rear, and not in full view. We may compromise with expediency, but not with principle. Agag, the king, was hewed to pieces by Samuel before the Lord in Gilgal.

The Spirit of the Law

16. The letter of the law is altogether inadequate to meet the evils in the heart. The priest Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint a king to take Saul's place. Samuel was impressed with the stately appearance of Jesse's seven stalwart boys. The dignity and power in the letter of the law holds the field. We still believe that the best defence is to prepare for war in time of peace. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Jesse's youngest boy, David, then with the sheep, was the Lord's choice. The shepherd king represented the Good Shepherd, the King of Love. The kingdom of God shall be established among men through the operation of the law of love-to love others as ourselves, which is the essence of the law and the prophets. David's name—"the beloved"-prefigures the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt- 17:5.) David was also from Bethlehem in the land of Judah—"the house of bread"—out of which came the "Governor that shall feed (or, rule) my people Israel." (Mic. 5:2, Matt. 2:6). Every man who attempts to set things right in his household, or in the world, by force is only

making more trouble for himself and others. The distress and depression, the aftermath of futile efforts to carry out this policy, are dispelled by the Psalms of David, notably the Psalm of the Good Shepherd. But the relief thus afforded is only temporary awaiting a complete change of heart.

17. A growing knowledge of the practical meaning of the law enables us to analyse the failings in others. We despise them. Our pride, however, blinds us to similar failings in ourselves. We defy anyone to convict us of the sins we place at other people's doors. We claim innocence even in God's sight. No argument from the letter of the law can humble our pride. David discarded Saul's armour and sword as unproven. They would be useless to David in meeting the giant. The proud warrior was laid low by one of five pebbles from the brook, and the giant decapitated by his own sword. A simple truth learned in childhood—one in five—driven home, is sufficient to put an end to conceit, and open the heart to correction by truth formerly accepted in theory, but despised in practice. Every youth learns in one way or another that conceit—his ingrained belief that "he knows it all"—is debasing. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased." (Matt. 23:12.) To see this at all times when pride blinds him to his faults, condemn self in humility, is the spiritual equivalent of the stone that smote Goliath. The power of the law of love to humble one's pride is comparatively simple to anyone who has curbed an incorrigible temper, or a coarse disposition, because they are unmanly. David rescued the kid out of the mouth of the lion and the bear. In this chapter we have the first intimation of the conflict between the letter and the spirit. David's three big brothers followed Saul. Eliab was incensed at David's presumptuousness in accepting Goliath's challenge. They who fight to uphold the authority of the letter of the law are impatient with those who believe in "the spirit which giveth life." (2 Cor. 3:6.) The power of the spirit in the letter is felt when pride is humbled, and is then beyond question.

The Letter Versus the Spirit

18. Saul, and Jonathan and David were all at one in the same house after the victory. But Jonathan, feeling in closest sympathy with David, and recognising him as his superior, gave him all the insignia of his right to succeed his father on the throne of Israel. This magnanimity implies the recognition or, rather, the acknowledgment of the supremacy of the law of love in establishing God's kingdom on earth. This acknowledgment, however, is not firmly established in the heart without many a challenge. Jealousy and fear turned Saul against David. The chorus of maidens ascribed greater prowess to David than to Saul. The church proclaims the overruling power of love. The literalist denies it. He protests that the proponent of love makes loud professions, but does nothing about them. Saul tried to kill David, and plotted to place him in the hands of the Philistines. David, however, proved superior to the test, and accepted Saul's daughter as his wife. The uncircumcised Philistines represent those who talk much about faith, but lack charity. David's gift of foreskins—as a dowry for Michal proves the power of the letter of the Word to purify one's nature of unclean thoughts and feelings when motivated by the right spirit. In this way we become wedded to the literal sense of the Scriptures, with its plain and wholesome lessons of life.

Autocracy Challenges Democracy

19. The conflict between the letter and the spirit continues. It appears, for example, in autocracy versus democracy. A government may be democratic in name, but largely autocratic in spirit; and vice versa. The issue exists in every form of government. It is only a question of degree. Many people mistake the name for the reality, but there are deposits in every republic, and freedom lovers in every autocracy. The tendency in despotism is always to destroy freedom, or the love of freedom, which is heavenborn. Saul sought David's life, and Jonathan could not change his father's purpose. Michal, however, contrived David's escape through deception, placing the image on the bed, when David had gone. What the church teaches in relation to the spiritual life is a dead letter, a lifeless image of the living content of the Word, to the autocrat. The prophetic utterances of the Book of Life are vocal only to those who yearn for newness of life. It is true that "every man possesses the ability to understand the secrets of wisdom like angels themselves." (P. 222.) Saul and his messengers turn prophets when in the presence of David and the priest, Samuel, on the hilltop—up where the sun shines. The literalist can talk the language of the spirit when exalted through sympathetic touch with the spiritually minded, but not from experience, which is the spiritual sense of the Word itself. It is one thing to know the spiritual sense, and another to be in it.

20. We are continually criticising people and existing conditions. That is Saul's place, to lay down the letter of the law. But there may be rancor in our criticism. David's place is to lay down the law for the spirit. The rancor in criticism is destructive of the love of the neighbor. David's life is at stake. The Lord says, "Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art in the way with him." (Matt. 5:25.) The application of these words to the case is transparent. That is Jonathan, the mediator's part. We are learning an elementary lesson in how to live in the world. "The field is the world." (Matt. 13:38.) The three, Saul, Jonathan and David, ought to be together. We must admit inability to control our feelings, Then the best policy is to keep out of other people's way "in the field" of action as much as possible, until we have regained our poise and goodwill. Arguments for this course of action are like Jonathan's arrows telling David to get away from the field. It is sound policy to be silent while adjusting feelings that have dynamite in them.

"Love Your Enemies"

21. To set the heart straight is a difficult task. David is king by Divine right, but not yet by the consent of the people. Love ought to rule in the heart, but the heart is antagonistic. We cannot love those who do wrong, particularly those who wrong us, or those whom we love. What then shall we do? David asks for five cakes of the shewbread on the Sabbath day, and receives them from Ahimelech, the priest. We were taught in childhood that the Lord loves everyone, both the evil and the good, and that his mercy endureth for ever, He is always the same. This is the spiritual equivalent of the five cakes of the "continual bread," the reminder of "the Lord's love toward the universal human race." In a tense moment of religious emotionalism we feel ready to forgive, and to forget; we are prepared to return good for evil. Worldly wisdom characterises this as idiotic. Fortunately the cynic does not take us seriously. David escaped from Achish by feigning madness.

22. Feigned madness! A wise fool! To love our enemies! To forgive seventy times seven! We are in serious doubt, and see dimly how to get out of our dilemma. David hid himself in the cave of Adullam, and there formed the nucleus of his army, composed of his brethren, and the distressed and discontented;

four hundred in all, the symbol of the soul's struggle to see right, and be right. Our old feeling of bitterness returns. Unlimited forgiveness favors the policy of laissez faire. Must we leave others free to wrong us or our loved ones without protest, or resistance? Surely not. Saul orders the extermination of the priests who supported David's cause. It were folly to rely upon the power of love to control lawlessness. Away with the agency that upholds this idea. Down with the church! Even the letter of the law does not permit such an extreme. Saul's guard refused to obey orders to slay the Lord's priests. Nevertheless many people are easily influenced by fear to side with a dictator, or autocrat. To them the teachings of the church mean nothing. Doeg, the Edomite, killed the priests, and sacked their city, Nob. Thank God the church is indestructible. Abiathar escaped, and placed himself under the protection of David.

Force Silences Reason

23. A national sequence to this is an attack on reason through pride. The Philistines rob the threshing floors at Keilah. The use of reason to get at the substance of things is spiritual threshing." This power can always be kept safe when the heart is right. David saved the people of Keilah by order from the Lord. The literalists try to disprove the power of the spirit to deal with social or personal disorders. They plan to discredit completely the rule of the spirit of love, by intimidating reason. The sight of the red flag silences argument, whether it be really red, or any other color. Call it red: that is enough. It is then useless to persist. Discretion is the better part of valor. It is always better to withhold reasons for inaction when they would be misinterpreted to the hurt of a good cause. David retired "to the wilderness of Ziph in a wood." It is not at all clear what to do in the circumstances. "Jonathan strengthened his hand in God." Saul pursued David, a rock separated them, and Saul was about to circumvent it, when news of an invasion of the Philistines relieved the situation. The spirit of the Gospel—resist not evil, turn the other cheek, love your enemies, sacrifice life as a ransom for others—seems the height of folly to solve the world's problems to the literalist, or advocate of law enforcement. The autocrat is intolerant of delay in settling disputes. Yet every now and again the autocrat faces failure. His theories will not achieve the expected result. The situation grows worse rather than better, until he reaches an impasse, and is forced to admit bankruptcy. He does not know what to do. The Philistine is on the warpath, and David further removed from the centre of things.

Correction in Loving Kindness

24. The contest between the letter and the spirit is long and tedious for everyone. The next picture of David's grief in cutting off the skirt of Saul's robe in the dark cave, when Saul was in his power, presents a very common phase of the experience. The robes of judges and kings are insignia of the authority of the law with which they are invested. To cut the border of the robe implies a curtailment of their authority. We may often be right in our criticism, or condemnation of others, but the criticism loses its force, when tinged with contempt or hatred. The moment we are conscious of that fact, we rue it bitterly. The word is needed; Saul's kingship must be sustained. Its power for good, however, is dependent upon the spirit within. The Lord spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees. His voice is the voice of love, even when it cuts to the quick. To judge justly, to criticise in mercy, to correct in loving-kindness, is not attained in a day.

25. David is king, but Saul is still on the throne. We believe in the law of love, believe that our actions should be determined by equal consideration of the rights of others. But, the iron rule, the law of necessity, still governs our judgments. We seek to correct injustice by summary procedure, and not by the slower and more arduous method of saving. We know it too, and suffer on that account. The fruits of righteousness are ripening, and losing a little of their acidity. Samuel the priest died and was buried in Ramah, "a height", in the lot of Ephraim. "And David arose, and went down to the wilderness in Paran." ("God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.") And David sent ten young men to Nabal, who was then shearing his sheep, to receive a gift for the protection David had afforded him and his shepherds in the past. All this implies a marked change of state in meeting life's problems. The priest's death and burial signify the awakening of the love of saving, which opens the eyes to new ways of establishing the brotherhood of man on earth. (A. C. 4110.) The intellect regards the schemes as folly. Nabal—"the fool"—refused to help David. But, a sympathetic heart grasps the situation better than the mind. Abigail met David's needs, and became his wife after the death of Nabal. By way of illustration: The nations believe military strength is the only guarantee of their security. Any attempt to induce them to repudiate that fallacy, get together, and rely on brotherly love, and trust one another, would be regarded as idle talk. Yet, somehow, sometime, men and women must act on this principle in answer to their prayer "Thy kingdom come." That is our firm belief. But, who will first set the example? Who first give in? Who follow in the train of Him who gave his life a ransom for many? What is our next step? Where the Lord's footprint?

Legitimate Law-Enforcement

26. The love of our neighbor requires us to uphold the authority of the Courts, and of the army, and of the police so long as they are needed to preserve order. David insisted that no hand dare touch the "Lord's anointed." The day will come when the abuse of force will call for judgment, and change. David took Saul's spear and cruse of water from him when in a deep sleep, and when Saul awoke, he confessed that David had spared his life, and that he had erred greatly. This presents the tacit admission that law-enforcement (the spear), and the lessons drawn from the letter of the Word (the cruse of water), at variance with the spirit of the Word, are attended by abuses and heresies that defy correction by the letter of the law. The recognition of this in experience opens the way further, but not completely, to the supremacy of the law of love. Saul is still on the throne, and David forced to retire to Philistia.

27. We are as yet tyros in applying the law of love to life. We must study the Word more closely to get its bearing upon the problems on hand. Achish gave David a city in Philistia, Ziklag, which then passed into the hands of the kings of Judah. We reclaim certain discarded teachings of the past, place them in a new setting, and then test them out in life's crucible, and prove their efficacy. From Ziklag David smote several of the nations that were of old "the inhabitants of the land." He concealed his exploits from Achish. Apathy discredits the importance of the spiritual life, Unseen efforts to remove the inner causes of disorder appear to accomplish nothing, and justly merit the contempt of the self-righteous! All of which strengthens apathy, or the inclination to let well enough alone. Achish imagined David would be his servant for ever.

Insufficiency of the Letter

28. David's victories, however, mark a distinct step toward the open acknowledgment of him as the king of Israel. Their significance to us gives proof of the complete insufficiency of the letter of the law to solve life's problems. This is clearly indicated by the sequence of events. "Man is led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word." (P. 154.) Those who are in the literal sense are blind to the internal sense. Only those who put love first and faith second see the inner meaning, because that inner meaning is the life of charity, or love to the neighbor. "This is the law and the prophets." Saul saw the handwriting on the wall. Neither urim nor thummim—the flash of light from the stones in the ephod—nor dreams, nor prophets, could bring the answer to his problem. He resorted to what he well knew was an illegitimate method of gaining enlightenment and direction. From that source he learned the inevitable. Even the letter of the Word made the lesson inescapable—"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) They who hear and do build upon the rock, the acknowledgment of the Lord in newness of life, the life of charity. To these alone the inner meaning of the Word is an open book.

29. In the conflict that follows, Saul on the throne represents the supremacy of force in suppressing evil to restore order, the Philistines represent the claim of infallibility of our own opinions, and David, anointed but not regnant, represents the supremacy of the law of love. David is back of the Philistines in its advance against Saul. Neighborly love supports the argument against the attempt to establish Might as Right. Achish recognises the sovereignty of David. "I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God," he said. Nevertheless, David is incompetent as yet to deal with the spirit of absolutism. Further experience is necessary to teach us the inefficiency of this spirit to cope with human wrongs.

30. Meanwhile the Amalekites, taking advantage of David's absence, attacked Ziklag, and carried off the women, including David's wives. The Amalekites represent our indisposition to study the Word and work out its meaning in relation to the problem on hand, in this instance, the use of force or moral suasion, might or right, militarism or pacifism, in trying human relationships. Mother church is weak, and negligent of her duty to warn the people of the wrongs from which they suffer. David's victory over the Amalekites with the aid of the Egyptian, "servant to an Amalekite," and rescue of his wives, implies an awakened conscience conversant with all the facts of the situation. Those who fought and those who "tarried by the stuff" shared alike in the spoil. They who are sympathetic with the cause, but too fainthearted to fight, share the benefits of the progressive life equally with those who bear the brunt of the conflict, benefits which extend far and wide throughout all the community, each participating according to his receptibility. "Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." (John 4:38.)

31. The supremacy of the law of love in action throughout the church supersedes the authority of the letter of the law in the regenerate life. The letter of the law is proven inadequate to redeem society. Saul and his armor bearer fell upon their own swords, and Jonathan was slain by the Philistines. Imperialism effectuates its own ruin. Even where the spirit of the Word shines through the letter, that is not enough to save humanity. "The testimony of Jesus" throughout all prophecy is necessary to that great far off event. As might be expected they who regard civilisation as purely cultural noise abroad the pretensions and the failure of religion, and contemptuously discredit its power to preserve the peace of the world, The Philistines impaled the headless body of Saul on the walls of Bethshan—"the house of security." On the other hand, they who have experienced the protection of the law know otherwise. The men of Jabesh Gilead buried the bones of Saul and his sons under a tree at Jabesh. And, later, David reburied the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the sepulchre of Kish. Force has a rightful and necessary place in the social

order to restrain criminality and protect the innocent. And it may be added that self- compulsion in obedience to the letter of the law is conformable to the spirit of the kingdom, but the "self" in the compulsion must be the "unself", or "as of one's self," to give it the quality, that is everlasting.

II Samuel

The Law of Love

Chapter 1. Saul killed himself. An Amalekite, however, claimed that he slew the King. David, taking him at his word, commanded that he be slain for killing the Lord's anointed. The seeds of death lie concealed within the effort to regulate the conduct of others without any consideration for their freedom, a state of mind much more common than is generally recognised. It appears that wilful ignorance, which Amalek represents, is responsible for man's failure to obey the letter of the law. Educate the people, and they will cease to do wrong! This subtle untruth which virtually justifies evil-doing, and does away with the authority of the law, must be utterly repudiated. A better education does not necessarily lessen crime. It frequently aggravates it. The authority of the law can only be established and maintained through a growing love of the neighbor, which King David represents. David's lament on the death of Saul and Jonathan voices the terrible heart-burning over the wanton disregard of the plain teachings of Christianity, not specifically by others, but by our own selves. The rule is to hurt others as they hurt us, and not to love them in spite of their lawlessness, or shame them by returning good for evil.

2. To know this by experience proclaims the enthronement in character building of the principle of loving one's neighbor as oneself. The belief in this principle is signified by Samuel's anointing David as king. The acceptance of it as a ruling principle in life is indicated in the proclamation of David as king in Hebron. Hebron was the home and the burial-place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Jesus Christ was the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matt. 1:1.) Christ's kingdom comes through the revival of the child spirit of innocence in man, the set purpose of loving others as the Lord loved us. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." (Mk. 10:15.) Hebron means "union", and the land of Judah represents the domain of the heart. David blesses the Gileadites for burying Saul. As soon as love rules within it pleads for mercy toward everyone in the administration of justice. Human nature, however, is heedless of the plea. Abner made Ishbosheth, Saul's son, king over Gilead, and all Israel. The contest between the letter and the spirit of the law is still with us, in its last stages. We have definitely and seriously joined issue with our inveterate disposition to lay down the law to practically everyone we know. We have something against each one in particular, something we dislike, which, in whole or in part, restricts our cooperation with them. The servants of Ishbosheth-Benjamites- contend against the servants of David at the pool of Gibeon. It is an old grudge. The teaching of the letter of the Scriptures is brought into the arguments pro and con. The contention for mercy seasoning our judgments is overwhelming. An attempt is then made to follow up the victory, clinch the argument with a blow that will settle the main question once and for all. Asahel pursued Abner, Saul's captain, to kill him, but was himself slain by Abner. It is impossible to condemn a sin against the letter of the law unconditionally. We cannot judge whether even murder is in self-defence or not, until we know all the facts. And where shall we draw the dividing line between hatred and zeal, or between lust and love, or sincerity and insincerity. Or, where does the love of money end, and mammon worship begin? This can be known and judged only through experience under the jurisdiction of the law of love.

Love Supersedes Compulsion

3. The country is in the hands of the Philistines. The life of religion is in the doldrums. The policy of coercion is futile, Force breeds force. So "Abner called to Joab, and said, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?" It is significant that Ishbosheth, Saul's son, could not rule in the land. Abner took him to the other side of the Jordan, and made him king there. He still had followers in the land. But Saul's dynasty had come to an end. The rule of common sense is rendered senseless when devoid of any spiritual motive. The name Ishbosheth means the 'man of shame,' indicating apparently the shame of failure and impotence. In such a frame of mind man resents any proposal to reinstate the authority of the law that is unorthodox, and that does not emanate from self in the first place. Ishbosheth reprimanded Abner for cohabiting with his father's concubine. The altercation leads to the perception that the objective cannot be attained without a more fraternal spirit among men. For example, many people are enamoured of the idea of "collective security," (Saul's concubine, and not his wife). In the League of Nations, however, military and economic coercion as a means of preserving peace has failed. Apparently, any plan to police the world, or prevent war by forcible suppression, awaits the growth of good faith among the members of the League. This means a strengthening of the house of David. Abner's reaction to the criticism of Ishbosheth sent him into the ranks of David. Through deceit, however, Joab assassinated him, and brought upon himself the curse of David. It is a common weakness to discredit the good constructive views, or policy, of persons who have done us an injury. To damn them with faint praise, or in an underhanded manner, is most damaging to our own character, a debt that must be paid tip some day. The pledge of honesty on Abner's part was certified by the return of Michal to David. The literal sense of the word attests that a man may change his mind radically and be perfectly honest. He is entitled to the benefit of any doubt, especially if his sympathy is in the interest of strengthening the kingdom of God on earth.

4. Literalism and coercion are well nigh inseparable. The spirit of compelling others to obey the letter of the law dies hard. To end war and at the same time uphold the authority of the letter of the law is the problem. Compulsion defeats its own end. "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." (Matt. 26:52.) Saul and Ishbosheth had violent deaths. The Amalekite and the sons of Rimmon must also die by order from David, and the king's bones he preserved in the land. The law of love is operating all the time to destroy the spirit of compulsion, but save the truth—the letter of the law. It is said that "when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble and all the Israelites were troubled." Here is an evident gain in strength through weakness. The point is stressed in the reference to Mephibosheth being crippled in infancy. We discover our helplessness in fulfilling our duty to God when we are as unsparing in criticising ourselves as others, and extend mercy to them in the same measure that we expect it of them for our shortcomings.

Establishing the Rule of Charity

5. "The good of love reigns in the Inmost Heaven, the good of charity in the Middle Heaven, and the good of faith in the Ultimate Heaven." (A. 9687.) In itself the rule of faith, that is, the good there is in knowing the truth, and yielding unquestioning obedience to it, is insufficient to restore heaven on earth. Saul's government was shortlived. The reign of charity—equal consideration for the rights of others—gave it an extension until all that was at variance with the good of charity in the good of faith was eliminated, and it became a part of the reign of charity. "The head of Ishbosheth was buried in the sepulchre of Abner in

Hebron," where David reigned. Then David was publicly acclaimed King over Israel, as well as over Judah. The law of charity, or neighborly love, rules within after sundry tests of life (implied in thirty years of age), and is destined to be the rule of life to mete out a square deal for everyone. The length, breadth and height of the Holy City are equal. At the outset David took Jerusalem—"the possession of peace"- as the capital of his kingdom. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2.) "The city of David" henceforth represents not simply the teaching church, but the living church-society in the process of being organised for the greatest good of all, with no one in it who fails to see the light, or to walk in that light. "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." The knowledge of the race experience in the life of religion, summarized in the Word, contributes to the edification of the new civilisation. The king of Tyre built a house for David. New concepts of the possibilities of life under the new law are brought into existence. Then the old spirit of depression and inactivity must be overcome, and all hands set to work in the reconstruction of the social order. The Philistines must be subdued to establish the kingdom of Israel.

6. The ark of the covenant had been in the hands of the Philistines, and then at Kirjath Jearim. It is now time that it be restored to its place in the house of God. The re-establishment of the covenant in the heart, however, is not a simple matter. The law receives a new interpretation imposing new obligations upon man. The ark is placed in a new cart, drawn by oxen. When this meaning of the law comes under discussion (Nachon's threshing floor is reached), misapplications of it endanger its stability. We make a fatal mistake, however, when we assume responsibility for the errors of other people. The new order cannot get under way until freedom of conscience is conceded to one and all alike, We are all God's children, shortsighted and fallible. Our professions do not determine whether we are a God-fearing people, or otherwise, but our life. A new joy enters the heart when we unite with men everywhere in the belief that God is leading all into a stronger bond of unity even through divergent, or opposing forms of government. The individual is our neighbor so far as he serves his fellowmen. The country and the world are neighbors to be loved in a larger degree. But "the Church of God is a neighbor to be loved in a still higher degree, and the kingdom of the Lord in the highest degree." (T. 412-416.) The heart expands with this new and inclusive conception of the love of the neighbor, and the possibilities of sharing it with so many others in building up the kingdom. The joy attendant upon the installation of the ark in a humble tabernacle on Mount Zion pictures the new found delight in the broader and deeper interpretation of the law. The literalist, or fundamentalist, is altogether incapable of conceiving the meaning of this experience. It seems to be immoderate, Utopian, and even immodest, flouting time-honored customs, conventions and proprieties of life in uncovering numerous hypocrisies and camouflage. "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

7. The ark is in a tabernacle, within curtains. David lives in a house of cedar. As yet there is no house of cedar for the ark, or for God to dwell in. David contemplated such a building. The prophet assured him that his house and kingdom shall last for ever. "Thy throne shall be established for ever." The tabernacle represents the reception of the law of the Lord in simplicity. The child-mind perceives the truth without question. When that fails, the law must be brought home by the rational consideration of principle in relation to practice. We get at the meaning of the law by figuring out how we should feel if other people treated us as we feel like treating them. To receive the law through equal consideration for others in all we do or say according to reason is the equivalent on the plane of the spirit of building a house of cedar for God to dwell in. The cedar tree with its spreading branches on different levels is significant of growing processes of thought on lower and higher planes of living in symmetrical relation to each other. The love of the neighbor is a principle with many ramifications, higher and lower. And when this principle is applied

to all social relationships the kingdom of God is at hand. The letter of the law is quite inadequate to govern the spiritual relationship of man to man. Only the spirit of the law—the law of love—is equal to this task. David's throne lasts for ever.

Opposition and Support

8. The throne, however, is safe only so long as its enemies are held at bay. The Philistines need constant attention. We are naturally inclined to lay down on the job from time to time. We procrastinate, we excuse ourselves, we rely upon the goodwill of others to compound our debts, rather than pay them up in full right away. We think we have not enough on hand. And we often get discouraged and depressed. We overindulge in the pleasures of life to drown our sorrows. The Moabites need disciplining. Our pleasures must be kept in their place as servant and not as master. Through war with Syria and other enemies within and without the land David acquired great possessions of brass, and silver and gold, which he brought to Jerusalem and dedicated to the Lord. This means that the serious study of the law in relation to our daily problems yields a wealth of knowledge for the perfecting of the body, mind and soul as the Lord's dwelling place. The little kingdom within must be properly organised to administer the law efficiently and expeditiously. We must even keep a record of our judgments in every issue that comes before us. Precedent is of importance in meeting new and larger issues in life. "Jehoshaphat ('God is judge') the son of Ahilud was recorder."

9. Every sound judgment formed in relation to our changing states of mind strengthens the kingdom. Growing problems, however, require closer contact with the main sources of enlightenment—God's Word. Lame Mephibosheth represents those who love the plain teaching of the Word, and feel deeply their inability to live up to it. This spirit, with the help of Biblical scholarship, represented by Ziba, Saul's servant, and his sons and servants who took care of Mephibosheth, is invaluable in promoting the spiritual life. Mephibosheth fed at David's table as one of his sons. They who love the inner meaning of the Scriptures are fed from above. The text finely illustrates the threefold point that "doctrine must be drawn from the letter of the Word, and be confirmed thereby; that genuine truth does not appear in the sense of the letter to any others than those who are in illustration from the Lord; and that those alone are in this enlightenment who love truths because they are truths, and make them of use for life." (S. 50-61.) "Through the sense of the letter there is conjunction with the Lord and consociation with the angels." (S. 62-68.)

Doubts and Denials

10. Anyone who has measurably entered into the spiritual life knows the reality of it, and that God's presence is with him in his Word. Yet the world is full of people, many of them good people too, who "reject and despise the interior things of worship, for the reason that they are in the love of self." They know better, and do not wish to hear anything about doctrine, or the inner meaning of the Word, or the spiritual world. We may be in the grip of that spirit ourselves at times also, especially when sorely tried. The Ammonites represent that spirit, with its scornful doubts and denials. The Syrians are in league with the Ammonites. Reasons are not wanting to back opposition to the credibility of spiritual realities. How can we meet these reasons and contempt in other people, or in ourselves? Joab takes the best men to attack

the Syrians, and Abishai takes the others to fall upon the Ammonites. The victory was Israel's, when the Ammonites saw the Syrians flee before Joab. We must meet reason with reason, until the enemy has not any ground to stand upon. He is forced to retreat in disgrace.

Conviction of Sin

11, 12. While this conflict with Ammon was still in progress David was in Jerusalem. What happened there is intimately connected with the issue. David loved Bathsheba, and got rid of her husband at the hand of the Ammonites, that he might marry her. The king can do no wrong. So thinks everyone who places himself above the law, and rejects all spiritual values (the Ammonites). Nathan's petition for the king's judgment in a parallel offense brings out the interpretation of the law which the throne of David represents. And David's acceptance of the prophet's accusation against him exemplifies the operation of the law for every subject of the kingdom. David's sin covers every offence against the law, for all unneighborliness and inhumanity are essentially adulterous—evil in wedlock with falsity. But how does it come about that we accept guilt in God's sight for offenses which we freely condemn in others? For it is notorious that self-love resents criticism either from without, or from within. In childhood the voice of our parents checked our waywardness and formed our sense of right and wrong. And often the appeal of love gave poignancy to the word, and we felt sorry. The love of Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, represents that child love of the parent in the man. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were buried in a cave that belonged to Ephron the Hittite. The sacrifice of Uriah the Hittite's life fighting the Ammonites for David's sake represents a conflict within which settles the question that life without God's love is valueless. The rich man stole the poor man's ewe lamb to entertain a stranger. The prophet chose the ewe lamb to represent Bathsheba. The king took God's gift of love, pure and undefiled, and appropriated it to himself to satisfy a desire wholly foreign to the spirit of heaven. And so "the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." Everything damnable in human nature through the perversion of God's love must be brought into the light from God's Word, and set right through repentance, as exemplified in the Lord's life. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." (Lu. 1:68, 69.) David's relationship to Bathsheba represents the relationship of self love to the love of the neighbor. When self love predominates over the love of the neighbor the fruit of this relationship must die. But when self love and the love of the neighbor are in wedlock—on a perfect equality—"the son of peace" is born. Bathsheba bore Solomon to David, and David ended the war with the sons of Ammon, and returned to Jerusalem with their king's crown upon his head. Further comment is unnecessary. (See Psalm 51, noting especially the caption.)

Taking the Spiritual Sense Literally

13. David's son Absalom now figures largely in the story. David's home troubles reflect our trials with "the foes of our own household." David represents the spirit of the law, or the law of charity. That law whether written or spoken can be taken literally, or according to the spirit. Absalom represents the letter of the spirit, and his sister, Tamar, the affection for it, the affection for a literal interpretation of Swedenborg's writings, for example. Amnon, Tamar's brother, David's firstborn in Hebron, of Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess, represents the love of the good there is in this spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures, The meaning of the

illicit relationship of Amnon and Tamar then seems to be this: Starting with the premise that the Lord "bore our sicknesses" and healed them all by his word, we passionately desire to prove the infallibility of the Word to solve the problem, following in his footsteps. Frustrated and disillusioned when we are dealing with the subject theoretically (Amnon feigned sickness), we uncover to our own satisfaction the nakedness of an abstract spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures. This is a terrible injustice to the cause of religion. The literalist (Absalom) in rebuttal seeks to demonstrate, again theoretically, that the spiritual sense of the Word holds the solution of all our problems. Absalom invited the princes, and Amnon in particular, to a sheep-shearing, and there killed his brother. The defender of the faith gives the lie to his argument by violating the very principle on which it is based, the golden rule, "the law and the prophets." Absalom, therefore, fled from the presence of David to Geshur in Syria. The literalist studies his subject more ardently than ever to prove that he is right, and his opponent wrong.

14. David's heart went out to Absalom, but he could do nothing about it. Theology holds an important place in the life of religion, but cannot be accepted as a substitute for it. The literalist shuts himself out of the kingdom so long as he hates anyone who does not agree with him. Yet, a reconciliation must be effected. Joab, captain of the host, represents one skilled in defending the law of the kingdom. The church needs the abstract interpretation of the Word. The church in the juncture is represented by the wise woman of Tekoa sent by Joab to the king with an appeal for help. David was so far affected that he consented to Absalom's return to Jerusalem, but not into his presence. The Lord cannot be seen till love takes the place of hatred. To none others than those who are in the life of charity is the Word an open book. Absalom had a fine physique and a remarkable head of hair. His outward appearance won the hearts of the children of Israel. He had three sons, and a daughter, whom he named after his sister, Tamar. And he was the son of David. In its inner meaning all this is descriptive of the prestige of a well constructed system of theology, calculated to withstand criticism from any quarter. The possessor of such a system may well change his feelings of hatred and contempt for its critics or traducers to those of pity, or indifference. In any case, as the picture presents it, Absalom made his peace with the king. Through importuning Joab he gained an audience, and was greeted by David with a kiss.

This Supplants the Rule of Charity

15. Then Absalom got his horses, and chariots and forerunners together. He stood at the gate of the city to solve the people's problems, which David left untouched. He won sympathy and respect from everyone, and had himself proclaimed as king at Hebron. David, and his servants and body-guard fled across the Jordan to the land of Gilead, and Absalom entered Jerusalem to rule there in his stead. This represents the ascendance of doctrine-the letter of the spirit-to supersede the spirit of the Word itself. We study the spiritual sense of the Word and the teachings in relation to the spiritual world. We are awed by their coherence and completeness, and think that they must be equal to solve every problem under the sun. An infatuation for the doctrines, however, forces the law of love to abdicate in its favor. Put the letter of the spirit in the first place, and charity is ruled out of court. Enforce orthodoxy in doctrine and exegesis, and automatically the love of the neighbor becomes a mere matter of doctrine. Love toward the neighbor is accorded first place in theory (Zadok, the ark, and Hushai are left in the city with Absalom), but second in practice. David abdicates his throne, and flees for refuge to Gilead.

16. The Lord from his Word sustains the heart in the trial. Ziba provides food for David and his household on their flight. But Shimei cursed David by the way for destroying the house of Saul. Abishai suggested retaliation, but David would not hear of it. The transition from the rule of the letter to the rule of the spirit is not simple, or free from trial. On the one hand we are blamed for being too lenient, and on the other for being unsparing, or overexacting. We are unjustly called to account for having stood firm against narrow literalism, and ignored our critics. They harm themselves more than they harm us! But we do well to accept criticism in meekness, when retaliation would only add to our shame. David's abdication in favor of Absalom represents a weakening on our part in another direction which requires correction. This is indicated by David's policy of leaving his house in charge of his ten concubines. Ten concubines! In charge of the house of David during the interregnum! King David represents the rule of charity. His ten concubines acting for him therefore represent forms of government upholding the same rule of life, but having many contradictory elements in them. (The Holy City is the Lamb's wife.) The earliest forms of government were theocratic. Church and state were one. There was no conflict between them. With the decadence of peoples and nations Church and state were separated, and at variance. Then emerged the specious error that redemption was at hand through change in the government, and the enactment of new and better laws, all with the sanction of the church. Intimate contact with this state of mind and practice discloses the unwelcome facts that a corrupt church is unquestionably fallible, and that no nation can be reclaimed by legislation. "Exterior good does not remove the evil of lust, or the root of evil." (C. 13.) We must "cleanse first the inside of the cup and the platter, that the outside may be clean also." (Matt. 22:26.) The letter of the spirit of God's Word 'is unmistakably clear on this point. Absalom cohabited with David's concubines to the abhorrence of David, and the strengthening of his position in Israel for the time being. And David's first act on his return to Jerusalem put his concubines in ward for good and all. The first duty of the Church is the call to repentance, and the first duty of the state is to put its house in order in completion of the work of the church. Absalom's treason represents the attempt to set up a theocracy, directing all human activities authoritatively by the doctrines of the church as a substitute for the law of love.

Consequences

17. The study and understanding of the abstract spiritual sense of the Scriptures is altogether good. It insists throughout upon the life of charity. But, if we place the hope of the future welfare of humanity upon the acceptance of our theory, or particular interpretation of the Scriptures, then the theory is at the centre and charity itself at the circumference. Absalom forces David out of the land. David will not oppose Absalom any more than he opposed Saul, Charity, or love, impels respect for those who love the abstract spiritual sense of the Word, as well as for those who love the letter of the law. The spirit of charity counsels tolerance, well knowing that the literalist, or theorist, will see the folly of his ways, if given time and a free hand. By guidance from above the literalist rejects the suggestion to summarily get rid of the spirit of charity as weak and inefficient. This is the import of Ahithophel's counsel. The theologian is forced to admit the strength of charity, and the consequent need of a powerful organised force to prove the superiority of faith over love. Hushai's counsel. But David is also advised to prepare for the attack.

18. The battle was in Gilead, on the other side of Jordan, in the wood of Ephraim, all representative of an obscure literalistic understanding of the spiritual sense of the Word. "The wood devoured more people than the sword." Argument has no point to the dogmatist. He is quite oblivious to the impracticality and obscurity of his views. He does not see even the ridiculousness of the extremes to which he pushes them.

To him they are revelation, or drawn from revelation. That is enough! But, what follows reveals the inside of the situation. Absalom rode on a mule through the wood, his head caught in the branch of an oak tree, his mule went from under him, and he was left suspended between heaven and earth. Mules, on which kings rode of old, signify "the internal rational which is spiritual." (E. 355.) The dogmatist gets involved in his own ideas to such an extent that he forfeits reason. His theories are without any practical bearing on the spiritual or on the natural life. A sensible person sees the absurdity of the conclusions, and passes them by without further notice out of kindness of heart. Not so the rationalist. He is not satisfied until he has shown the fallacy in the premises and conclusions, and disposed of the issue for ever. Joab ended the tragedy with three darts piercing the heart of Absalom. How does this stand in the eyes of the law? The king sat between two gates. One gate represents the heart open to influences from above, and the other gate the mind receptive of a better understanding of the Word. (See E. 208.) The watchman on the roof over the gate indicates that the whole issue must be considered from within. First thought turns to the good that comes out of the experience. "All is well." This is the report of the son of Zadok, the priest. Second thought centres on the cruel fate of the victim. David is overwhelmed by sorrow for the death of his son. The health of the Church depends upon its understanding of the Word. Why do people not realise it? Why are they so apathetic, even antagonistic to the teaching of doctrine?

The Failure of Dogmatism

19. Paternal love blindfolds the king. Joab must remove the covering. The defender of the law points out that the question is not the defection of the people, but the failure of dogmatism, the infallibility of dogma. The people must be encouraged to think for themselves, and get together in freedom on their problems in the light of the Word. David shall again be placed on the throne with the help of Zadok and Abiathar, the priests. Then all Israel returns to the support of the king. Church and state fall through blind subjection to authority, but rise again through subjection to the government of laws, and not of men.

20. The authority of the law, however, is called in question. The authority of men persists. David put Amasa, Absalom's captain, in Joab's place, and ordered him to quell the rebellion. Amasa proved himself to be untrustworthy. Joab disposed of him, pursued the rebel chief, Sheba, and finally got his head by the help of a wise woman in Abel of Beth-maachah. Sheba is said to be a Benjamite, and also "a man of mount Ephraim." Benjamin sometimes represents "new truth, interior truth," and Ephraim "the new understanding" of the Word. With all things that are new there is a temptation to regard them as of a superior order, before which everything that is old ought to give way summarily. Regard for the feelings of others-the authority of the golden rule, David-demands patience, tolerance and kindliness. Joab returned to Jerusalem (the city of peace) unto the king.

21. The conflict with Absalom and Amasa was followed by a great famine. So also the controversy over the supremacy of dogma, or doctrine, is succeeded by famine, "not a famine of bread," however, "nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11.) Strangely enough the famine in David's time was said to be a visitation for the ruthless slaughter of the Gibeonites by Saul. The covenant with the Gibeonites in Joshua's day represented the pledge to read God's Word regularly for guidance in life. This practice brought into being certain beliefs about the letter of the Word. These beliefs have been ruthlessly destroyed by the criticism of a new and more enlightened generation. This specially relates to the interpretation of the Scriptures to live by. But modern criticism in turn needs to sacrifice many of its beliefs drawn from the letter of the Word when the light of the Spirit is turned upon the sacred page. David

gave seven of Saul's sons to suffer death for the death of the Gibeonites. Many, however, still cling to the old ideals, and endeavor to protect them from what they painfully regard as desecration or sacrilege. Rizpah defended the bodies of Saul's children for a season against molestation day and night. Nevertheless, there are many precious lessons drawn from the literal sense that are of perennial value, and should never be lost. David buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the land. It is also worth noting that when the spirit of charity takes hold of the enforcement of the letter of the law, new problems arise, such as saving the criminal, or healing the mentally sick. The effort to solve these problems illustrates the meaning of David's preservation of the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the land. After this new troubles arose with the Philistines, and more giants. A deeper knowledge of the truth and life's responsibilities finds us confronting new conceits, and an indisposition to overcome them. Our trials, however, are our opportunities to test our strength, and to "taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Ps. 34:8.)

22. Psalm eighteen, which is introduced here, takes on a powerful meaning in the whole context, and illustrates how the Psalter may be used continually in life's vicissitudes to enhance the value of the living Word, and uplift the soul in its worship and love of God. Prophecy is the word for thought and action. The Psalms are the utterance of the heart in its sorrows and its joys, its struggles and its victories, its humiliation and its exaltation. Vision of the Brotherhood of Man.

23. David's last words are for us an evaluation of present attainments and future possibilities. We have learned from experience that to rule in the fear of the Lord is the highroad to self-mastery. And though our house is far from being in perfect order, the covenant with God ensures the ultimate fulfilment of our highest aspirations. David had a consuming desire to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem by the gate, when that city was garrisoned by the Philistines. The well is the Word, the fountain of wisdom for men and angels. The water from this well is the knowledge of One, "the Bread of Life", who came out of "the house of bread," "A Governor that shall rule, or feed, my people Israel." (Matt. 2:6.) Every truth by which we have condemned evil in thought, or speech, or action, and regulated our conduct in accordance with the law of love (David's three mighty men), gives us a keener perception and deeper appreciation of the personality of the Lord in the story of the Gospel. Breaking through the inveterate opposition to change in our habits of living we receive the living truth in the life of our Lord, very different to our own. We may not drink the draught. We consecrate it to the Lord, confessing the sacrifice necessary in the first place to prove worthy of it. In his great dramatic lyric, "Saul", Browning places on the lips of David a prophecy of "the great love motive of the Redemption" that glimpses the meaning of the picture here.

"Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul it shall be
"A face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
"Shall throw open the gates of the new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

Thirty and seven great and mighty men whom David had are named on the roll of honor, with some of the enemies whom they conquered. The last, though not least, is Uriah the Hittite.

24. Is it possible in thus reviewing the exploits of the past to eliminate all thought of self-merit? It is human to say in the heart, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is lie that giveth thee power to get wealth." (Dent. 8:17, 18.) For this reason the law provided that when the census was taken every man should give a ransom for his soul

unto the Lord, that there be no plague among the people. The offering of a half shekel to the Lord is the token of an acknowledgment that his is the power to think right, and to do right. (Exod. 30:12.) This offering was omitted on the occasion when the people were numbered. Joab objected, but David would have his own way. And so the plague followed, As fire burns, so self-praise plagues the heart. The more we demand of others, the greater the suffering brought upon ourselves, and others too. Fortunately, David's repentance reflects our consciousness of the sin of taking credit for any good we may accomplish in this world. At best "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." (Lu. 17:10.) Reason furnishes ample proof. The plague stopped at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. David bought the threshing floor and the oxen which he offered on an altar built unto the Lord. And that was on Mount Moriah, the very spot on which Solomon would straightway erect the temple, and hard by the spot where the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) "gave up his life for his friends." (John 15:13.)

I Kings

The Higher Law

Chapter 1. "Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat." The evening and the morning mark the time of day. The close of David's life and the beginning of Solomon's reign feature a memorable day in the soul's history. The grip of the cold hand of death on David does not intimate indifference to the law of love due to the outgrowth of self-merit. David's comforter was Abishag, of the tribe of Issachar (meaning "hire, recompense"). But, "the king knew her not." The love of the neighbor and the love of approbation are not complementary. Self-merit bears a very close relationship to family pride. Therefore, David tacitly approved Adonijah's self-exaltation in having himself proclaimed king in his stead. Nathan, the prophet, however, counselled Bathsheba to remind David of his oath that Solomon should be his successor. Nathan seconded her petition, and David was persuaded to fulfil his vow. Therefore Solomon was anointed and proclaimed king. The picture discloses the manner in which the principle, long upheld in theory, as the highest possible for man to live by, is at last enshrined in the heart to fashion character in keeping with "the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 20:15.) The higher law of loving others more than ourselves is enthroned within, despite the insidious appeal of self-interest, through confirmation from the spirit of childhood within (Bathsheba), the Word of God (Nathan), the experience of the Lord's saving grace (Zadok), and the testimony of the lives of the best of men (Benaiah, and the Cherethites and Pelethites, the bodyguard of both David and Solomon).

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope, and fear. . . .
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all."
- "A Death in the Desert." Browning

2. From childhood we have imbibed the thought that it was noble to give in, or give up, for the good of others. We were also familiar with the great sacrifice made by our parents for our good, although we were quite incapable of appreciating its priceless value. All this secretly makes it possible for us to form a slight conception of the Lord's love in "ministering to all, and giving his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28.) Our experience in the effort to be neighborly reasserts the importance of keeping the commandments (David's charge to Solomon), in a spirit free from hypocrisy (Joab must die for his deceitfulness), and bounteously shared with the simple good (the sons of Barzillai shall feed at Solomon's table). David also charged the king that Shimei should die for having cursed "the Lord's anointed." The supremacy of the love of others more than self to be pure should uphold the rule of equal consideration for others against all criticism. The sacrifice of life for one's country is not pure unless devoid of hatred, etc. Therefore, Solomon, in the first place, got rid of Adonijah, because he asked to have Abishag to wife. Self-exaltation and the love of approbation are antonyms of self-sacrifice. They are altogether incompatible with the rule of selflessness. In the second place, Solomon deposed Abiathar, the priest who forsook David for Adonijah. The church that yields to the pressure of worldly interests denies in practice the rule of a self-sacrificing love. In the third place, Solomon disposed of Joab, captain of David's host. The spirit of self-

immolation uncovers deceitfulness in our life of religion, which must be eliminated that the love of God in Christ may reign within. And, lastly, Solomon took up the case of Shimei. He was of the house of Saul, and represents the traditionalists, who take violent exception to a legitimate interpretation of the spirit of the law contrary to their orthodox point of view. They "make the law of God of none effect by their traditions." (Matt. 15:6.) The traditionalist may be of service in questioning or in supporting matters of conscience (David's throne), but is proscribed when antagonistic to the truth perceived from the Lord (Solomon's throne). Literalism survives so long as it confirms truth that is above reason, but is outlawed when opposed to it. "The truth of love" is unassailable. As a subject of Solomon Shimei was safe so long as he lived in Jerusalem, but when he broke "the oath of the Lord", and left Jerusalem on his ass, to bring back his servants from Philistia, he brought upon himself the death penalty. They who are in the love of God, "the celestial, never reason about faith and its truths, but being in the perception of truth, from good, they say that it is so. The spiritual speak and reason about the truths of faith, because they are in the conscience of good, from truth." (A. 2708.) And so David's reign had perpetual warfare. Solomon's reign was characterised by peace. His kingdom was established after the death of Shimei. So far as God's love is a part of our being we perceive the truth without argument. "Let your communications be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matt. 5:37.)

The Power of Perception

3. What follows illustrates the nature of perception as the inmost and surest rule of conduct. Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem while building "his house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of the city." The love of God awakens an interest in knowing everything that has any bearing upon the building of character, and the church, and the defense of civilisation. Neither the people nor the king were right with God. They worshipped in high places. We are just becoming alive to the unduly high opinion we have of ourselves and our work. The law to love others more than ourselves already begins to assume a new and more portentous meaning. To love others as ourselves requires the renunciation of evils affecting our external relationships with them. While to love them more than ourselves requires the abandonment of evils known only to ourselves and the Lord. It means giving up our lives-our pet love of self and the world-for the love of God, which is the love of everyone, and most of all those in greatest need. To see where this leads, or applies, requires more than intelligence or knowledge. As in a dream we see that nothing short of a wise and understanding heart will meet the situation. To ask this in faith is but to receive it, and know it through practice. Two harlots sought judgment of the king. Like the two thieves on Calvary the two harlots represent humanity up for judgment before the Lord. In the case of the harlots each bore a son. That son represents the truth in regard to the adulterous state of the heart, intermingling the worship of God with the worship of self. Some smother the truth about themselves in time of trial (nighttime), protesting under judgment that theirs is a living faith in God. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," however, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) Others are prepared to sacrifice everything to preserve alive the truth about themselves, confessing under judgment that the love of self had robbed them of it. Their hearts are broken when they see the dreadful consequences of their thoughtlessness. The king brings out the meaning of the law. The love of God in Christ reveals the truth without argument.

4. Solomon's government was fully organised. Priests, princes, and officers administered the law in church and state. The boundaries of the dominion were far reaching, and peace and prosperity reigned throughout the land. The provisioning of the people was ample. The wisdom of Solomon spread abroad to

the ends of the earth. To an expectant and repentant world nothing is more compelling and convictive than the simple words of wisdom that shew definitely and unquestionably what it is that keeps the nations and men apart, and shew further how the barriers can be removed to make this earth God's home for everybody.

It Visualizes a New Civilisation

5. The building of the temple-the house of God-symbolizes the reconstruction of civilisation. "The real worship of the Lord consists in performing uses," (A. 7038), with the thought of others constantly in the foreground, and self receding more and more into the background. The nations today are highly organized for war, or at war, and exemplify exceptional cooperation under the law of necessity. Every man must stake his life and do his bit to the limit of his capability. Voluntary cooperation for the commonweal bears no comparison. And why? Because each individual seeks his own good first, and the good of others second, or last, to the serious disorganization of society, and the exclusion of millions from the right to "perform uses," and earn a living. The situation, however, is not hopeless. Far from it. There are men and women today who are busy assembling the materials for a temple in which God can dwell among men. Hiram, king of Tyre, "was ever a lover of David," and sent servants to know what he could do for Solomon. "Tyre signifies the interior knowledges of good and truth; thus those who are in them." (A. 3448.) Despite appearances to the contrary we are learning lessons from the world's wars. And from the unseen conflicts in private and public life and the heartaches for the sufferings of the unfortunate, there come countless efforts to give them a square deal. And beneath all, or above all, the light that shines within through the cultivation of a closer friendship with the Lord, intensifies the shadows cast in the background by our own weaknesses and transgressions. Growing convictions on these different planes of life for proving more worthy of our countless blessings serve in the living temple, as did the cedar in Solomon's temple. And the stones that give stability and permanence to the building signify the fundamental facts of life, and, first of all, the fact of Christ, the chief cornerstone of the building, the stone which the builders in the past rejected. (Matt. 21:42.) The value of all these facts, however, depends upon what they mean to us, or teach us. Our interpretation of them has to be freed from fancy or invention. The stones were made ready beforehand, so that no tool of iron was heard in the house, while it was being built. God gives us to see the bearing of all facts on the future growth of civilisation, when we humble ourselves before Him. The self-sacrificing spirit back of the effort to establish social justice in the world puts life into our convictions, our interpretation of history and revelation, and our progressive work. Solomon was the heart and soul of the work of building the temple, the house of God. The living temple is conceived in war, but constructed in peace, as and when the ideal is actualised bit by bit.

6. The pattern and furnishing of the temple were the same as those of the tabernacle. The temple was built on a larger scale, and was more elaborate and ornate in its parts. The tabernacle is a symbol of the simple worship and life of childhood, and the temple of the more complex civilisation of the manhood of the individual and the coming race.

It Forms a Sure Judgment of Evils Within

7. Solomon also built his own house, with its porches, one of which was the throne room, and another a house for Pharaoh's daughter. The king's house had windows in three rows, and light against light in three ranks. This is significant of the means provided for our judgment in the regenerate life. We have the light of knowledge, the light of intelligence, and the light of wisdom. "There are three degrees of altitude-natural, spiritual and celestial-in every man from his birth." (DLW 236.) Light flows into man by these degrees. He can think as angels think, but is not elevated into the higher planes of living unless his love is freed from everything contrary to the light. Only when "love is purified by wisdom does it become spiritual and celestial." (Ibid. 422.) From the love of wisdom man comes to know the evils that are in the flesh. There is no evil on the heavenly side of his nature. All evil is on the ground floor, or at the outer entrance to the soul. The work of judgment is on the same level. And the knowledge of the letter of the Word from which the doctrine of life is drawn to form the judgments is likewise on the same level. The house of Solomon's wife, the daughter of Pharaoh and the throne room were on the street level. (See P. 100-128.) Great importance is laid upon the outer and lower parts of the temple. Hiram cast two pillars of brass, a molten sea, bases, lavers and numerous vessels for the house of God. Constructive work in fashioning us as temples of the Lord goes on through constant trial. This Hiram came from Tyre, but he was "a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali." Naphtali means "strugglings." As we cease to do evil, we learn to do well. Again, the temple is conceived in war, but constructed in peace after war.

It Is the Best Help in Worship and Prayer

8. Now follows the dedication of the temple-the consecration of our lives to the service of the Lord. The central feature of the ceremony is the placing of the ark of the covenant in the oracle of the house, the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim, "under the shadow of the Almighty." The Lord does not impose upon us a heavier burden than we are able to bear. (John 16:12.) The effort to do right as God gives us to know it may never be relaxed. The staves in the ark, visible in the holy place before the oracle, may not be taken from it. (Exod. 25:15). Our ruling motive to keep the new commandment to love others as the Lord loved us, means giving up the self-will to do the Divine will in all things. The temple is king Solomon's temple, not David's temple. The law to love our neighbor more than ourselves includes the law to love them as ourselves. We need to aim at keeping the higher law all the time to maintain an everlastingly progressive life. Our reach should ever exceed our grasp. "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) Solomon blessed the Lord for fulfilling the promise made to David in the erection of the temple. He prayed that the further promise of an unbroken succession on the throne of David might also be fulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ, born in the house of David, came as the consummation of all prophecy, to overcome all evil, to shew us the way of the cross, invoking prayer at every step. The seven prayers that follow are an invaluable help to the builders.

The effort to consider others first, and self last, brings into the light many ugly feelings and thoughts. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Ps. 119:18.) We capitulate again and again. "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive against me," for Thou art my salvation. (Ps. 35:1.) We are headstrong, and closed to advice from within, or without. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end." (Ps. 119:3.) We are sick at heart, or plagued with lust, or passion. "Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight." (Ps. 119:77.) We wander into a far country. "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me." (Ps.

119:19.) We sometimes feel hopeless about the life of religion. "Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope." (Ps. 119:116.) Last of all, we have become addicted to the practice of self-justification to conceal our failures and mistakes. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." (Ps. 119:176.) Our prayers for light and strength never cease. "And when thou hearest in heaven, thy dwelling place, forgive." We know we are forgiven, as we forgive, and become different—more Christlike.

9. The temple specifically presents God's part, and the king's house man's part, in working out a new order of things. There shall never fail a man upon the throne of David. The restoration of society is assured through the predominance of the love of God in Christ among men. It is unthinkable that the children of men will deliberately repudiate their responsibility to God, and leave the social order to become a scrap heap. The new order is just the working out in detail of the content of the joys of childhood of the race and the individual. It took twenty years to build Solomon's temple and house. In remodelling character, separating the good from the evil, the knowledge of the spiritual content of the Word is invaluable. Hiram, king of Tyre, contributed cedar wood and gold, symbols of spiritual knowledge and the good of it as the rule of life. This is abstract and not experiential knowledge. Hiram was not interested in the twenty cities in Galilee which Solomon offered him. He was content to give of his gold without thought of remuneration. And Solomon used it freely to establish his kingdom, making his enemies subservient to him, and his subjects men of war and leaders in the civil service.

It Unfolds the Love of God in Christ

10. "The good of love reigns in the Celestial Heaven." (A. 9687.) What is this good of love? None other than the love of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. "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." (John 3:16.) Nothing short of this motive is adequate to the salvation of the race. How good that love is can be gauged only through experience actuated by the same motive. The world hears of it, and many in a Gentile state of mind, unsophisticated and unprejudiced, are disposed to seriously consider Christianity for a solution of their pressing problems. "The Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, and came to prove him with hard questions." And, when she "had seen all Solomon's wisdom," she concluded that his "wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame" reported to her. Even so every open-hearted enquirer may see "the good of love" with its illimitable possibilities in theory. The Queen of Sheba acknowledged what king Solomon's wisdom meant to her by her present of gold, and spices and precious stones. Gold is the symbol of "the good of wisdom and love" (A. 1552) as a rule of life. "Spices, because sweet-scented signify truths from that good." (A. 5621.) And stones signify the precious foundation truths of Christianity. The names of the Apostles were in the foundation stones of the Holy City. The representation of Solomon—the higher law of sacrificial love—accounts for the prevalence of gold in his time, and of peace too. Following the vision of the "good of love" comes the vision of the way to gain it. In the picture that is by ascending the steps to Solomon's throne. The six steps conceal the thought of the struggle in adjudging every evil hostile to the Christian life. We reach the judgment seat itself when we "lay in dust, life's glory dead," and take up life eternal. The two lions standing beside "the hands on the seat," and the twelve lions on the steps represent the power in the truths by which we fight and conquer our self-will. And the throne of ivory overlaid with gold is the emblem of this supreme court of justice ruled by the letter of the law (the ivory tooth for defence), with the redemptive spirit of love above it, or within it. In his three temptations in the wilderness, representing all temptations, the Lord repelled the devil with the

words "It is written." (Matt. 4:1-11.) And in the promise to those of the seventh church in Asia, He says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21.)

And It Unmasks Evil in the Inner Life

11. But, Solomon had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, and sacrificed unto their gods. The heart that loves others more than self finds good in every religion, and also in every cult. Or, we may think of these religions and cults in ourselves individually. Everyone of us has quite a pack of them. "Religion is of the life." We are all wedded to numerous ideas about life, some good, some not so good, and some evil, which, however, we regard as good. As for cults, we are easily carried away by many ideas that are eccentric, or impractical, good, bad and indifferent. We worship them all while under the spell of them, and are misled by quite a number of them. They must therefore be brought under judgment. In other words we now reach the point where we analyse our feelings and our thoughts separately, and in their interplay, in every issue that has any bearing upon our lives. The kingdom will presently be divided, and we must bear in mind the principle that "all the kings of Judah and of Israel, of whatever character, represent the Lord's kingly function." (A. 1409.) This is somewhat difficult to accept, because most of the kings of Judah, and all of the kings of Israel, were evil kings. How could they represent the Lord's kingly function? Because the kings represented the evils under judgment in the people. (S. S. 35.) Like people, like king. The evil is thus brought plainly before our consciousness to be analysed and removed from the mind or the heart. The king represents the truth that condemns, or acquits. He does not act that part, but represents it, as will appear in the sequel. And now there arose two enemies who oppose the judgment—Edom and Syria, Edom represents "those who turn aside from good by utterly despising truth." (A. 3322.) And Syria represents self—justifications, or excuses, for indulging evil. The vision becomes a part of our lives, a belief destined to revolutionise them, Solomon died, and was buried in the city of David.

12. We have seen the vision of the selfless life, but are not prepared to champion it publicly even in theory. To do so asks altogether too much of us. The people pled with Rehoboam to be more lenient with them. Contrariwise, he determined to make life still harder for them. Life becomes successively more strenuous as we advance into the light of life. Rehoboam thought to force unity, but was advised to concede the right of secession. Head and heart must undergo judgment separately. So Rehoboam ruled Judah in Jerusalem, and Jeroboam "built Shechem in mount Ephraim," and placed golden calves in Bethel and Dan to make the separation complete. The head is turned by the worship of the world. We are conscious of the reversion of our thinking worldward, and know not how to alter it. We must live in the world as it is. We are not willing to be ostracised, or thought of as peculiar, or foolish. We love money and popularity, and are not ashamed to admit it. At the same time we know that our thoughts are not quite right, and await development of the problem with interest.

The Love of Gain

13. King Jeroboam represents the state of the people in natural good devoid of spirituality. They do that which is good, but for the sake of gain. "The word of the Lord from Jerusalem" condemns this form of the worship of mammon, and prophesies a day of judgment. Everyone knows that "it profiteth a man nothing

if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." (Matt. 16:26.) The attempt to silence conscience renders him powerless to do good. The profit motive vitiates the good we do. Jeroboam's arm dried up when he called for the death of the prophet. Repentance restores the lost power. But he who has seen and condemned the profit motive at work in himself must renounce it altogether. The prophet must not eat or drink at the king's table, and he must return to Jerusalem another way. What followed shows the effect of a relapse. The persuasive influence of culture, and refinement and the blessings of wealth perverts the word of God to approve of our abandonment to them for selfish advantage. The appeal of the false prophet from Bethel persuaded the prophet from Jerusalem to share his table with him, which meant death. Mammon worship destroys the worship of God. But note, the power to will and our reason still exist, although they are for the time being wholly inoperative. The lion and the ass stand by the carcass. "Evil can be confirmed as easily as good. Everyone who has any thought from interior understanding can see that the power to will and the power to understand are not from man, but are from Him who possesses Power itself, that is, Power in its essence. The Lord preserves these two faculties in man (freedom and reason) unharmed and as sacred in the whole course of his Divine Providence." (P. 87, 88, 96.) The carcasses of both prophets were buried side by side in Bethel. Failure to live in the light is not final, but ought to teach us a very precious lesson.

14. At times our troubles due to mammon worship—the worship of the golden calf—makes cowards of us. We complain about our lot in life: we are unjustly afflicted. We pray to the Father of mercies for immediate and unconditional relief. This weak state of mind is pictured in Jeroboam's concern for his sick son, Abijah, whose name means "Jehovah is my father." We stand to lose our faith in the Fatherhood of God, when we cry for mercy, and receive no answer. The church is at fault. She has misrepresented the truth by teaching her people "to approach the Father immediately and pray to him to have compassion for the sake of the Son." (E. 114.) Wherein lies the fallacy? Jeroboam's wife disguised seeks the prophet's judgment. The prophet himself cannot see the truth without enlightenment. The open Word, however, discloses the unwelcome truth that there is no complete relief from our troubles until we have reached bottom, have met and overcome all the evil in them for us. "No one enters heaven by mercy apart from means." (H. 521.) "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. No man cometh to the Father but by me." (Matt. 11:27, John 14:6.) And that means but by the way of the cross. The child Abijah shall die. Our faith is misplaced because the heart is unsound. "Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord." The people worshipped in high places. When self-conceit runs strong, our thinking cannot be sane, or normal. Yea, further, the teachings of religion are sacrificed for worldly wisdom. Shishak despoiled the temple in Jerusalem.

Head and Heart at Variance

15. There was almost constant warfare between the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel. So long as neither the head nor the heart is right with God the conflict continues. Life's trials bring the worst in us to the surface, and also the best. The conflict between the head and the heart is all for the best. Good impulses check ungenerous thoughts. Yet again, resentment interferes with cooperation. Baasha built Ramah ("a height") to control the highway to Jerusalem. Asa procured help from Syria. Reason contends for the futility of war. The heart needs correction as well as the head. Asa in his latter years was diseased in his feet. Life is not what it ought to be. Thus ended the first dynasty of the kings of Israel. Several dynasties followed, while there was only one dynasty in Judah. Our point of view in religion may vary, will vary, from time to time. The love of the Lord may be weaker or stronger betimes, but may never change.

That is the soul's life: the essential saving element. The transactions of the kings are all ,carefully recorded. We make our daily record. The thoughts we cherish go to form character. None of them is ever lost.

16. There now follows a long spell of analyzing our thoughts—thoughts seen to be pernicious in an augmented degree as they are brought into the light. The voice of the prophet—the voice of conscience—therefore, becomes more articulate and effective. Unclean thoughts and false suppositions come under special condemnation. "Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat." Wrong thoughts originate from wrong feelings, and we generally recognise, though dimly at first, the wrong feelings in the background. The synchronism of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah is referred to constantly in the text. But when the kings of Israel are particularized it centres attention upon our thoughts. And when the kings of Judah hold the field, our feelings are under special judgment. Our thoughts and feelings are only separable by concentration of the mind on the one or the other. We touch the feelings indirectly when at work upon our thoughts, and directly affect our thinking when rectifying our emotions. At present a special line of thought is under judgment, and the iniquity of it appears in a new and very distressing form. "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." He married Jezebel, and reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. Baal means "master," and represents the particular form of worldliness that is the owner and possessor of our souls. We have discovered the specific form of mammon worship that controls our thinking.

17. The Word through conscience tells us that this closes the mind to instruction from heaven. "There shall be no dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." We are not open to correction even from God. "Those who have confirmed themselves in favor of human prudence in whatever they see, hear, or read, notice nothing else; nor can they, because they receive nothing from Heaven." (P. 235.) That is the first conviction. Obstinacy removes conscience still farther from the centre of things. Conscience is still alive, as also a real interest in the truth, and a living faith in God, (the widow of Sarepta and her son). Conscience needs support. Does the truth uphold it? Have we the courage to face what it requires of us? Is conscience merciful? The meal and the oil will not fail, when the care of the prophet is a first consideration. But, if conscience is neglected, faith dies. The reproach falls upon the spoken Word. "Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" To choose good is life, to choose evil is death. At all times, however, "whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25.) Elijah's miracle demonstrates the power of the Word to revive faith in answer to earnest affirmative prayer.

For God, or Mammon?

18. "How long halt ye between two opinions,"—the worship of God, or the worship of Baal? The young ox chosen for sacrifice is the embodiment of the spirit of youth patiently but eagerly awaiting the word to start teamwork in the world. But to what end, or in whose service? "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." The fire of untiring love burns only in good done without thought of reward. Service for gain kindles a passion that becomes more exacting and unsatisfying the freer the rein given to it. Baal's prophets must be slain, to the last one of them. The last selfish thought of what is coming to us for any good we are able to do in the world must perish. Then the windows of heaven will be opened to pour out greater blessings than we can use.

19. Elijah, however, has to settle with Jezebel for the death of Baal's prophets. She represents the love of the old order that resents criticism, and strikes back. We have not reached the last ditch yet. The cause of religion is still cherished, though we are sorely tempted to give it up. If conscience goes, however, what will become of us, or the world? Elijah is jealous for the Lord God of hosts. The Lord shews Elijah that 'He is not in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. The Lord is not in the heartrending spirit of opposition to the truth, or in the violent disturbance of our feelings, or in the subsequent outburst of passion. Beneath and within all is a still small voice pleading for a hearing. We are not what we might be, and can be. In expostulation the prophet insisted that the voice of truth will die with him! Quite otherwise! Though conscience may be speechless for a time, the day will arrive when it will become strong enough to assert itself. The public conscience awaits the growth of the private conscience to make itself articulate. The appeal to reason ought to carry conviction further, (Hazeel). Failing that, the enforcement of the laws of charity should be sufficient, (Jehu). Should that fail too, assuredly the voice of charity itself cannot fail, (Elisha). That is the voice of the Savior Himself.

20. We are all at times sorely tried by the idea of our own importance, the conceit of our own intelligence. "My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." (Deut. 8:16.) The king of Syria claims to take possession of everything belonging to the sons of Israel. The king of Israel said, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off." The Syrians were drunk. Self conceit is an insane state of mind, readily recognisable, especially in others. The issue is fought out on the inner and outer planes of life. Israel scored a victory in the mountains and on the plains. But, singularly enough, when the enemy plays the role of a friend in need, we recognise him as "our brother," and take him in, or, rather, we ourselves are taken in. The prophet by parable and self—humiliation predicted the death of Ahab, and the captivity of Israel.

"Seek First the Kingdom of God"

21. The manner of Ahab's death was determined by his treatment of Naboth. Ahab could not have Naboth's vineyard adjoining his palace in Jezreel for a garden of herbs. It is contrary to order to degrade the spiritual life to serve the civil and moral life. The Lord speaks of Himself as the true vine, and his disciples as the branches. The image is used to portray neighborly love which we have from the Lord,—justice, mercy, sincerity, etc. To turn a vineyard into a vegetable garden images the use of sincerity, for example, to gain prestige in public life. "Honesty is the best policy," and so forth. The spiritual life thus debased generates sorrow (fasting), misrepresentation of the truth, (blasphemy), and, finally, total rejection of the spiritual life. Naboth means "fruits", the fruits of the vineyard, the inheritance of his fathers. The word of the Lord by Elijah pronounced judgment on Ahab and Jezebel for their crime. Ahab's penance only deferred the punishment, which, for us, means the time when we have to face the consequences in ourselves.

22. Headstrong we get ourselves into a mess. Ramoth Gilead was in the hands of the enemy. Headstrong we are determined to clear up the mess by making things worse. That is God's word to us! The advice of the four hundred prophets to Ahab! Our better part, the heart, casts a doubt on the plan, and asks for a further interpretation of the Word. Micaiah, a true prophet, at first favored the plan, then saw clearly its un wisdom. Ahab would fall in the battle. A lying spirit would convince Ahab to the contrary. Headstrong we are bound to carry out our plan. It is God's plan! The heart is not in it. Jehoshaphat, undisguised, cried out when attacked by the Syrians. The head is convinced that its solution of the problem is infallible. No one

can expose the imposture, or self-deception, although it is plain to any impartial combatant. A stray shaft from a bow, drawn "in his simplicity," went direct to the weak spot "between the joints in the harness," and ended the tragedy. We plan for others, when, in reality, we are planning for ourselves. The consequences are inescapable. It is terribly humiliating. We have seen it all: We have learned a lesson. We know now from experience that "those are in their own prudence who corroborate appearances in themselves and make them truths, especially the appearance that one's own prudence is everything, and the Divine Providence nothing, unless something universal; and this is impossible without the particulars that constitute it." "So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead." The heart is enriched by the experience. Jehoshaphat did "that which was right in the eyes of the Lord: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." There is still much hidden from us through our own conceits that has to be brought into the light, and rectified, before we have won our freedom.

II Kings

The Captivity - Failure to Heed Conscience

Chapter 1. "Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab." Distrust in God appears in another form. Moab, son of Lot, represents those who are naturally good, but "despise the interior things of worship, because they are in the love of self." (A. 2468.) "Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and was sick." To see faults in others, and look down upon them with contempt, debases character, and sickens the soul. Instead of going directly to the Lord in his Word for counsel and relief, we rely upon the common practice of killing the conscience, and consigning all unpleasant feelings to oblivion. We choose death rather than life. The effort to take the life of the prophet drew fire from heaven to consume the soldiers sent to apprehend him. We sometimes resent, or despise, the claims of religion to solve our troubles. Only a hard experience will teach us that to despise others and the teaching of the Word is spiritual death.

2. The teaching of the Word! That is what Elijah—"my God is jah"—represents,—the truth that enlightens, directs, corrects and condemns. Elisha—"to whom God is salvation"—also represents the teaching of the Word,—the truth that displays the tender mercies of the Lord over all his works, continually bringing good out of evil. The two go together all the way from the first perception of the truth, purposive and abstract, (Gilgal), to the recognition of its practical value, (Bethel), and finally applied to definite thoughts and feelings in each of us individually (Jericho). At each step in bringing the truth down to the point of contact with our personal needs, we meet the objection that it is becoming altogether too personal. Great determination is needed to stand by the truth until we see just where it hits us personally, see the wrong we must renounce to do the right thing. When ready to face the worst, the word of life (Elijah's mantle) opens the way to the scene of our renunciation. As soon as the Spirit of the Lord has effected the change within, with our consent, the truth appears in a new light. Elisha witnessed the translation of Elijah in the chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. The "genuine doctrine" drawn from the letter of the Word by an enlightened understanding is all aflame with the love of God. The vision is inspiring and overwhelming. It confers a double portion of the spirit of prophecy. "The scribes and Pharisees say and do not." (Matt. 23:3.) "Jesus taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt. 7:29). The efficacy of the spoken word is doubled when it comes from experience. The power of the Word then is illimitable to restore and to increase the abundant life in the spirit. "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:14.) Elisha healed the waters of Jericho, that the barren soil might become fruitful again. Nor dare we call the power of the Word in question, or treat it lightly, even in ignorance. The children suffered death for making fun of Elisha's bald pate. Ignorantia legis neminem excusat. Thousands suffer death annually through unwittingly violating the law. The consequences are more grievous in childishly ignoring the law of the spirit. The Lord requires us to forgive seventy times seven, for example. Apply this to a specific case on hand, (Elisha going up from Jericho to Bethel). Does it produce an incredulous smile? If so, that smile rudely destroys a childlike trust in God.

Our Inherited Good Nature

3. Moab again is the cause of trouble in Israel, representing, in the context, the natural good in us that has been paying tribute to the spiritual man. As professing Christians we take comfort and satisfaction in whatever good we have inherited or acquired. Moab paid the king of Israel thousands of lambs and rams with the wool. Our satisfaction with all that we are able to do for others is reasonable. But, when satisfaction turns to self-satisfaction, and we thank God that we are not as other men are, we must prepare for war. Three kings joined to subdue Moab. The heart (Jehoshaphat) is sound, but the head (Jehoram) is not clear either about the method of attack, or the hope of success. The word of the Lord (Elisha) furnishes an ample supply of practical knowledge and instruction as to how to meet the enemy, all of which appears as a violation of human rights to them. (To the Moabites the water appeared as blood.) The conflict is severe, breaking down the defences of our self-sufficiency, cutting off all thoughts of self-merit, and destroying the ground on which we base our claim to personal righteousness. The sacrifice of the firstborn ended the war. In this lies concealed the painful confession that all that we have or are is the Lord's. "Without Him we can do nothing." (John 15:5.)

4. Here follow three incidents having a direct connection with the foregoing experience. Having realised the bankruptcy of character, we are conscious of -an indebtedness to the Lord which seems impossible to repay. We desire to learn anew how to make better use of our two faculties of loving God and understanding his will. There is very little good that we have done from a pure unselfish motive. Immediately there comes to mind the Lord's instruction, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8.) We must look for opportunities to be kind, helpful and sympathetic. Borrow empty vessels, fill them with oil, sell the oil, pay your debt, and live on the rest.

"Is the heart a living power?
Self-entwined its strength sinks low;
It can only live in loving,
And by serving love will grow."
- E. Charles

As love grows we seek further enlightenment to love wisely, and not unwisely. In the upper chamber on the wall in Shunem the prophet found a comfortable retreat. By meditation in the Word we learn how to rest in the Lord, restore our courage, judge justly, and see the heavenward path ahead step by step. Such is the significance of the bed, the table, the throne (not stool), and the candlestick in that upper chamber. The overflowing heart and clearing mind brings about the birth of a new concept of life within, and an increasing joy in the home. But, in the heat of life's struggle, self-interest takes even that joy from us. The child died. The mother love in desperation sought the prophet's help, and the child's life was restored through prayer and touch in the upper room of the home. We "raise the dead" as required by the Lord, when we revive the faith we live by through contact with his Spirit in his Word. In considering the various views upon the solution of these problems the Word always helps to "amend the mass," (A. C. 3316) and learn how to unite the best there is in others for the commonweal. (A. C. 3316.) With meal, finely ground grain, Elisha healed the deadly pottage. And the bread of the first fruits was multiplied in the hands of the servitor, with more to spare after all had been fed. The more we share all we have with others, the more we have to give, with many unrealised desires left over from day to day. Said Juliet to Romeo: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea; my love as deep: the more I give to thee, the more I have; for both are infinite."

Deceit within Good Nature

5. The Word of God is The Book of Life—a living thing. Hence its power to heal. The cause of leprosy is deceit and hypocrisy. Gehazi's skin became leprosy, or dead, because he appeared outwardly sound before Elisha, while inwardly corrupt in the sight of God. In his case the disease in the flesh corresponded to the disease in the spirit. Naaman's cure, however, represents the method by which that disease in the soul may be cured. There were lepers in Israel uncured: they knew not their need of a Savior. (Lu. 4:27.) The Syrian represents the Gentile mind, free from religious prejudices, open to conviction, and eager to be set right with God's help. Elisha's recipe was simple and practicable. Wash you, make you clean: put away deceitful thoughts, and be sincere at all times in God's sight. That is what the water of Jordan, in which John baptised the people confessing their sins, represents. Abana and Pharpar represent popular faith cures that treat the effect, but not the cause. Elisha's prescription goes to the root of the trouble. Sincerity in the race will eliminate leprosy in the race in the long run. The effect must surely vanish when the cause has been removed.

6, 7. The healing of Naaman directs the thought to the growth of the church among the Gentiles, the simple-minded, through the plain teachings of Christianity. The sons of the prophets sought to build by the river Jordan, on the border of the land. The axe used to hew the beams represents the use of a keen intellect in shaping character to serve in a growing church, or communal life. "And one said, Be content, and go with thy servants." The servants of the ministry or missionary are science, art, literature, experience, etc. To go with them is to make use of them to bring out the life lessons from the Word according to, the capacity of the hearers. Often, however, the thought is separated from the purpose. The thought is lost in the depths. The purpose is the display of one's learning. We do not possess our faculties for imparting knowledge for self—glorification, but to give the child or adult something to think over, and to build a Christian character. The axe is borrowed, and not our own. We require to give frequent attention to the question, "Are we getting our message across?" to draw our intellect out of the depths for new and better service. Elisha provided a new handle for the axe. The next incident may doubtless be applied to other experiences, but has also vital relationship with the last thought. The teacher never likes to be reminded that he is speaking over the heads of his listeners. He argues that they need to be uplifted, or shewn truth far beyond their reach, or that he is giving them revelation, or that he cannot make his message any plainer. Syria (self-justification) was at war with Israel. Elisha knew the secret thoughts of the king of Syria. The king must therefore get rid of Elisha. But Elisha was guarded from above, and prayed that his servant might see it. There is no excuse for teaching abstract doctrine to those who do not want theology, but the word of life. "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Bread! The people hunger for the doctrine of life afire with the love of God. The teacher who cannot see this is blind to his incompetence and unfitness for the highly responsible work entrusted to him. He may resent correction, but acts sanely when he treats his critics as his friends. So the king of Israel fed the Syrians (Gentiles), and they "came no more into the land of Israel." The next verse contradicts this last statement in the letter. The meaning, however, is that the indisposition to accept correction is a settled point, and the teacher turns to the more difficult question of drawing the lesson of life from the Word that meets the needs of the people, and strengthens them for life's labors. There was a great famine in Canaan. The city was invested by the Syrians. The king and Elisha were within. The people were reduced to the point of starvation, eating their own children to survive. But Elisha promised plenty the next day, and his prophecy was fulfilled in a most unexpected manner. The Syrians heard the noise of the chariots and horses of a great host, and fled in terror. Here is a picture of God's people in desperate need of the bread of life, their suffering for the lack of it, the sound of a mighty message drawn from the Word, dispersing every argument opposed to it, and the restitution of freedom and normal living.

Four lepers were the first to verify Elisha's prophecy, and impart the knowledge to the starving inhabitants of the city. We are all plagued with hypocrisy, more or less. We die if we go to those who are in as bad a plight as we ourselves. We die if we do nothing about it. Under guidance from within we learn what the Lord has done to scatter the enemy. We take the lesson to heart, and share the experience with others. Only the unbeliever brings condemnation upon his own head.

Judgment Ripens with Experience

8. Sometimes-yes, "sometimes "-for the soul's experiences pictured in God's Word do not belong to the world of space and time, each following the other in chronological order. Each soul's experience has many sides to it, which may appear separately, or together, and on different occasions, but never exactly alike, for the context varies, and enriches them with advancing years. Thus, sometimes our faith is sorely tried. We are uncertain of our ground-where we stand, or ought to stand. "The Lord hath called for a famine." We hunger for righteousness, or to know what is right in an old or new situation. We take to the study of the Word. The Shunammite and her household sojourned in Philistia till the famine was over, and then returned to get back her home, and land and all the fruits it had yielded during that period. We always stand to gain when we see the open Word in the light of past experiences. Our gains, however, increase our responsibility in life. We discover evils that we justified by false reasoning. We know it, and must rectify it. Benhadad, king of Syria, shall perish at the hand of Hazael. And Hazael shall punish Israel, preparatory to the captivity, as prophesied by Elisha. Israel and Judah are on the decline. Both Joram and Ahaziah married daughters of Ahab. We are seeing more of the evil thoughts that come from the heart, because we are able to bear the sight of them, and maintain the steady labor of getting them out of our system, like the continuous cleansing of the blood from impurities to maintain health. Sometimes we get a glimpse of old time selfish habits, and do a little to temper or modify them. Joram smote the Edomites. "Yet Edom revolted under the hand of Judah unto this day."

9. Ahab was slain in the attempt to recapture Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians. His son, Joram, was wounded in battle with Hazael before Ramoth-Gilead. Ramoth-Gilead—"the heights of Gilead,"—in Gad, represents the dignity of labor, or good work. We believe in it, and do -what we can to raise the standard. But mammon worship has a greater hold over us than we realise, and we deviate from the path of duty, or become party to a questionable deal, and try to excuse ourselves. Or, it is possible to have passed through situations of that order, and met the temptation with firm resistance. If so, then the representation of the anointing of Jehu in Ramoth-Gilead to clear out the house of Ahab has been fulfilled within. "Him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay." Jehu represents the ruling principle of honor in business at work in exposing and cleaning up all fraud, sharp practice, or double dealing. Jehu is swift and uncompromising in carrying out sweeping reforms in fulfilment of prophecy-the truth foreseen in essence by gift from God before the crisis is reached. The sword of Jehu cut down Joram, king of Israel, Ahaziah, king of Judah, and Jezebel, who slew all the servants of the Lord.

10. Then Jehu accomplished the death of Ahab's seventy sons, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, and all the worshippers of Baal. Nevertheless, Jehu followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam. "He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." Hazael smote the people on the other side of the Jordan, and Jehu those on this side of Jordan. We carry on very much as we did before, but there is a difference. Some positive gain has been achieved, without the risk of a

decline. It is written in the books. The kings die, and are buried in the land. "The Lord admits man (individually and collectively) interiorly into the truths of wisdom and at the same time into the goods of love only so far as he can be kept in them to the end of his life." (P. 232.)

Trust in God Undergoes a Crucial Test

11. But, again, we face a serious crisis. "Athaliah destroyed all the seed royal." The infant Joash was secretly saved and cared for in the temple, and proclaimed king while still a child. On this slender thread—this weakest link in the chain—the hopes and fears of the throne of David depended. What a picture! In life's great crises self-will and God's will are brought into conflict. Job cursed the day he was born. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." How often we deny the existence of a merciful God. And there are not lacking men and women a plenty who seriously contemplate suicide as a means of escape from their trials. The love of God is out of sight. The Lord preserves it "in his holy temple." "He will not suffer his holy one to see corruption." Joash was six years in hiding. In the seventh year, on the Sabbath day, the high priest brought him forth again to the light, but under guard, and requiring the death of Athaliah and the destruction of the house of Baal. "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord's people." And they brought Joash from the temple to the king's house. "And he sat on the throne of the kings."

12. The love of God is again on the ascendancy, but it is still far from being pure. "The high places were not taken away." The recovery, however, stimulated reconstruction, "to repair the breaches in the house." "The hole in the lid" represents the opening, or opportunity to contribute in secret. The left hand may not know what the right hand doeth in giving to the Lord. "Moreover, they reckoned not with the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully." These are the only terms on which the new life or new civilisation can be built bit by bit. But we cannot always live up where the sun shines. Our troubles come to the fore again with threatening self-justifications. Hazael was set on taking Jerusalem. Joash bribed him with treasures taken from the temple. It takes a bit of self-love out of us when we deplore the loss of character in using our religious education surreptitiously in the service of mammon. Joash was the victim of a conspiracy, and buried "with his fathers in the city of David: and Arnaziah his son reigned in his stead."

Still Further Humiliation

13. The abuse of what the church taught us focalizes our attention upon our thoughts. Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, reigned in Samaria. The people there were in the hands of Hazael. We recall again the words of the Lord to Elijah: "Him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay, and him that escapeth the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay." Hazael's part in the drama is about complete, as also Jehu's part. The sword of reason and the sword of truth are always available, but now become merged in the word of the prophet—the sword of Elisha,—which no enemy can withstand. "I have slain them by the words of my mouth," saith Hosea. And this applies especially to the word of The Prophet. (Deut. 18:18, John 6:14.) Given a sound reason for ending a feud between self and a former friend, the king of Israel represents the principle of the brotherhood of man; the purpose to be neighborly to the former friend is represented by the bow, and the reason by the arrow. Power from above is back of that purpose and reason. Elisha's hands were placed

on the king's hands. Now look toward the rising sun-the Lord-and shoot. That shot registers deliverance from false reasoning. But to what extent? Our condemnation, or hatred, of evil is whole-hearted to start with, but cools down as we are confronted by more insidious evils. The king should have smitten the ground with the arrows five or six times. Our emancipation from the vicious habit of self-justification is not complete for the present. Yet the power of prophecy unto salvation is unimpaired. The voice of conscience may weaken, but whenever we notice the appearance of thoughts derisive of the voice of conscience-the band of Moabites invading the land at the coming in of the year-the forgotten word of the prophet is there to raise the dead. "When the corpse touched the bones of Elisha, the man revived, and stood up on his feet." Such experiences with the living word are humiliating. The touch of repentance that accompanies them helps to recapture some of our better resolutions that had been lost in life's strain.

14. The reaction of the heart to these experiences leads to, the disproof of the reasoning and false evidence which perverted our judgment in the immediate past. Amaziah slew the servants who assassinated his father, Joash. Reason and knowledge are the servants of the king, the lawgiver. At the same time the heart is strengthened. Human nature is enriched and common sense sharpened. Amaziah smote Edom and took Sela, the rock city, and named it Joktheel—"subdued by God", or "God's reward of victory." This gain, however, is tinged with false pride, which makes us somewhat arrogant at times, and must be put down. Joash, king of Israel, rightly took exception to being dominated by Amaziah. War followed. Judah was smitten, the wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the temple pillaged. All this seems to reflect a decided lapse in the life of religion. From the whole context, however, it implies greater strength in right thinking and right feeling through the humiliation of self-conceit. How Joash fought against Amaziah is -written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. Judah also brought the body of Amaziah, who was slain in Lachish, on horses to Jerusalem, and buried it in the city of David. Azariah, Amaziah's son, restored Elath to Judah. And Jeroboam, the son of Joash, restored Damascus and Hamath to Israel.

Inconsistency

15. The story now approaches the end of the northern kingdom. The southern kingdom is crippled. Azariah was a good king, tolerating only the old practice of worship in high places. But, he was "a leper, and dwelt in a several house." This describes the state of the heart in our later trials. We love the Lord above all others, but we also love ourselves overmuch. We only appear outwardly sound Christians: inwardly we know that the appearance is not sound and healthy, and we feel terribly isolated and lonesome through self-consciousness. When the heart is faint, the head is sick too. In the northern kingdom Zachariah reigned only six months, when he was succeeded by his assassin, Shallum. Within a month's time Menahem ended the reign of Shallum. A few years later Pekah murdered Pekahiah, Shallum's successor; and then came the first deportation of the tribes east of the Jordan and in Galilee to Assyria. This is descriptive of the terrible vacillation of the mind in being governed by principles that are in part right, but sadly at variance with each other. We are not consistent in our thinking. Worldly interests alter our point of view in public and private affairs sometimes slowly and gently, and sometimes with speed and violence. This is the normal concomitant of progress. But, so, far as mammon worship warps our judgment, and we justify bad policy or conduct, we not only retard progress, but hasten inevitable frustration, or downfall. Practically everyone sooner or later becomes a slave to habits of thought excusatory of selfish ways of living, and no argument or appeal to the consideration of others makes the slightest impression. We know it too, yet excuse ourselves again on the ground that the problem is too big

for us, or too hard for us. The Assyrian took the children of Israel in the confines of the land into exile. Fortunately, the heart feels that all is not as it should be. We are very unhappy about it. "In those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah."

16. Worship in Jerusalem descended to a lower level. Rezin and Pekah besieged the city without avail. Ahaz secured the help of Tiglath-pileser, who took Damascus, and killed Rezin. The drama represents what is taking place behind the scenery in the worship and love of self. The Lord permits us to see how at times the love of the world influences us to promote self-interests, and how strongly we justify thoughts and actions that would do untold harm to ourselves and others if given full sway. The statue of the goddess of Reason on the altar of Notre Dame in Paris at the time of the Revolution not only represented but corresponded to the fallen state of the people, and of the world too, at the close of the eighteenth century. They did not realise the significance of their acts. The soul in process of regeneration, however, can see from the Word the import of his thoughts and feelings, how he is enchained by them, and the way out. Fortunately, in the situation set before us in the text, the love of God is strong enough to hold our feelings in check sufficiently to prevent a complete downfall. But, the reasons for entertaining the dream of wealth or prestige, (the altar in Damascus), are so captivating, that we are unable to resist them in toto, to the desecration of our worship and love of, God, and the weakening of the life of repentance and self-sacrifice, (the debasement of the laver and the altar in the outer court of the temple). Ahaz's death and burial means that we have seen this in ourselves, and been immeasurably shocked by the experience.

Justification of Inbred Evil

17. Such a degradation of the love of God in the heart gives free play to worldly ambitions that are incorrigible, at least for the present. Thus, after three years' siege the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried away Israel into captivity, leaving only Judah in the land. We know that as young people we were very sure of ourselves, and considered ourselves above correction. This was all on the surface. A little later when we started in the world's work we discovered that it did not pay to expose our weakness. We then learned to conceal it, with the false impression that we were then free from the spirit of self-conceit. It was there all the same, growing in the dark. Israel sinned, and "built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city." Self-defence became a fixed habit of life. We were always right. Other people were responsible for all our sorrows and reverses, not we! The hardened criminal feels quite justified in robbing and killing. He is just getting even with the state! Our record bears no comparison with his! We firmly believe it. Yet, so far as we justify the evils in our hearts and lives, we are held captive to them, and have so far exiled ourselves from God. "The land" wholly occupied by Assyrians unable to adjust themselves to their environment implies unrestrained self-justification. The placing of a priest representing the worship of Israel marks the hand of Providence in ameliorating the situation for us. In the acknowledgment that we are not altogether blameless for world conditions, and our own sufferings in particular, lies our only hope of ultimate salvation, as will appear later. The message of "The Latter Prophets," which is to follow, is necessary to prepare us for the reception of the Lord, "The Son of David," and the fulfilment of his mission. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house, of Israel." (Matt. 15:24.)

18. The heart is still right with God. It even beats more strongly whilst the head is busiest endeavoring to justify worldly ways. Hezekiah removed the high places, and refused to pay tribute to the king of Assyria during the siege of Samaria. Through humility and sympathy we feel that we are not altogether right, but

know not what to do about it. After the crisis is past the heart weakens again in letting well enough alone. Meanwhile we lose ground. Seven years after the fall of Samaria Sennacherib took the fenced cities of Judah, and Hezekiah became his servant. Our self-justifications have invaded the heart, and threaten to break down our trust in the Lord altogether. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Ps. 124.)

Increasing Hardship

19. The heart is in sore straits. "Hezekiah rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord." What has the Word of the Lord to say to us? Isaiah counsels that bluff retreats at the presence of courage. Sennacherib had withdrawn, but reawakened Hezekiah's fears worse than ever by a blasphemous letter sent to him. Isaiah declared that this reproach and blasphemy against the Lord was contemptible in the eyes of the church. Sennacherib shall not enter the city, or even attack it, for the Lord will defend it for his own sake, and for his servant David's sake. So long as we will to do the Lord's will, "a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked." (Ps. 91:7, 8.) "That night the angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians." Our guardian angel delivers us out of the hand of our enemies.

20. Yes, but the strain of the trial is overmuch for ordinary human beings. "In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death." Conscience demurred that our house was not in order, and we were not ready to die. The Lord grants recovery to the penitent, and prolonged life. The "light of life" will shine for us so long as there is work to be done, and the will to do it. Hezekiah suffered from a boil, the remedy for which was a lump of figs. The sore spot in our system is our unwillingness to take life's trials, the permissions of Providence, with grace. It is surprising how quickly irritation and ill will disappear with a kind feeling toward someone in need—or a kind deed. We resent discipline. That resentment is the spirit of Babylon, which now makes its first open contact with Judah. Self will versus God's will. This is the inmost cause of all our trouble in the world. We have known it before in theory. We are now about to become personally acquainted with this evil, feel the force of it as far as we are able to bear it. The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem as a friend. Hezekiah shewed him all the treasures in the temple. Isaiah said that one day everything would be carried into Babylon, and nothing left. We cannot take aught with us until we have learned that it is the Lord's, not ours, to be used wholly for the good of others. To know what this means we must see wherein we are presently claiming it as our own, and only sharing it with others so far as that promotes our own interests. The "peace and truth" we enjoy in our study of the Word is given to strengthen us to "see all, nor be afraid." We cannot be too grateful either for the freer supply of practical knowledge of life in general which is ours today—Hezekiah's pool and conduit for refreshment and cleanliness in the city of David.

A Decadent Temple

21. Two of the most wicked kings of Judah, Manasseh and Amon, followed Hezekiah. They seduced Israel "to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." Therefore, "thus saith the Lord, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, and turneth it upside down." The Chinese say that "an inverted bowl receiveth no light." The perverted soul is empty and dark. "I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies." The sins of Manasseh are altogether foreign to our ordinary modes of existence today. In the letter: but not in the spirit! It would require time and effort to trace the counterpart in the spirit of the different ways in which he desecrated and profaned the worship of God in his time. Enough that we see in the world and in ourselves such a violation of the Christian life as is known to everyone in Christendom that we seriously wonder if the end of civilisation is not already in sight. Manasseh and Amon were "buried in the garden of Uzza," (meaning "strength"); that is, the garden of the king's house. Strength of character grows as we take courage and face the facts about ourselves. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9.)

Temporary Repair of It

22, 23. So far as we know it, and 11 shun evils as diabolical and as obstacles to the Lord's entrance, we are more and more nearly conjoined with Him." (P. 33.) And so Josiah followed, and proceeded to repair the temple, discovered the long lost book of the law gathered the people together in the temple courts, recited the law in their hearing, renewed their covenant with the Lord, and celebrated the Passover festival. "Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the Lord in Jerusalem." The sacrament of the Lord's Supper includes in its spirit the spirit of all the burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Israelitish Church. "To those who worthily come to the Holy Supper, the Lord is present and opens heaven." But, "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Lord through the Sacrament of the Holy Supper according to repentance before it." (Can. IV. 8, 9.) Josiah did much also to destroy idolatry in the land, even going as far as Bethel, and removing all traces there of the disorderly worship of the golden calf. "Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath" because of Manasseh's provocations. "And the Lord said, I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I have removed Israel." We know that there are evils within that we cling to and even justify. And we are quite unwilling that our unwarranted justifications should be brought into the light for condemnation. Josiah will not have Pharaoh-necho fight with Assyria. We know that we are wrong in attempting to conceal the skeleton in the closet from God's sight under the delusion that He knows nothing about it. The king of Egypt killed Josiah "when he had seen him" at Megiddo. Megiddo or Armageddon both signify "the love of honor, of command, and of supereminence." (E. 1010.) The people placed Jehoahaz on his father's throne, but Pharaoh bound him at Riblah, and took him to Egypt, where he died. Necho made Jehoiakim king, and placed Judah in bondage to him. All of this means that we would rather suffer any other indignity than have the worst in us brought into the light, or made known to anyone, which state of mind logically leads to a complete enslavement to self-will. We will not give in, we will not surrender.

Its Final Destruction

24, 25. Practically everyone has some kink in his nature or disposition, that makes life unpleasant for himself, and others too. It makes its appearance in childhood. It becomes more pronounced with the years. And when we have passed middle age it has gotten such a hold of us that we cannot, and will not, alter it, or let anyone touch it. There is evil in it, and more evil back of it. Throughout the story of the kingdom of Judah the worship in high places persists. And throughout the story of the kingdom of Israel the worship of the golden calf is there from start to finish. During regeneration self-conceit and worldliness lie concealed in the background of every variety of evil in the heart or mind that comes to the surface for judgment. We are not able, or ready, to uproot it. We justify it (the Assyrian captivity), and are set against conviction (the Babylonish captivity).

The last three kings of Judah were evil kings. The first of them, Jehoiakim, rebelled against the king of Babylon. Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites, all vassals of Babylon, were sent to punish Judah. They took some of the best into captivity, among whom was Daniel. The second king, Jehoiachin, capitulated, and was taken to Babylon with many others, and much gold from the temple. The third king, Zedekiah, rebelled. His sons were slain, his eyes put out, and he himself bound with fetters and taken to Babylon, with all the brass in the temple. The city and temple were destroyed. Everything that is in us is seriously affected by our unwillingness to give up the cherished evil in the heart that has become an inseparable part of ourselves. The only gleam of light in the encircling gloom appears in the advice to the remnant in Judea by Gedaliah, their governor, that if they served the king of Babylon all would be well with them. Some rebelled and fled to Egypt. But Jehoiachin, who from the first gave in, was released from prison. And the king of Babylon "spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon: and changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life." This points the way out. Deny the fact that you are in the grip of evil, and all is lost. Admit it frankly. place your faith implicitly in the Lord and Savior, and the bread of affliction will in time become the bread of life. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31.)

On our failure to heed conscience-the captivity of Israel and Judah-the Lord opens the way for perception to take the lead in unmasking the most insidious enemies of the soul, namely, the love of dominion for the sake of self and the love of gain, its ally. The significance of the message of The Latter Prophets, Major and Minor, unseals "the way of salvation."

Volume III:

"The Latter Prophets"

I. The Major Prophets

Isaiah

The story of the Word up to this point unfolds in its inner meaning the growth of an experiential knowledge of God from infancy to middle age, especially with those who are being prepared for positions of great responsibility in life both in this world and in the world to come. It is like the growth of the tree of life from a sprout to its branches with leaves and fruit thereon. The regulation of conduct in accord with the sovereign principles of duty, justice and self-sacrifice,—represented by Saul, David and Solomon, —establish the kingdom of heaven in the heart. Yet, we are far from being what we should like to be, and ought to be. We still justify certain evil habits that have become second nature with us. Israel is captive in Assyria. An inbred love of having our own way blinds us to that fact. Judah is captive in Babylon. "The vision of Isaiah"—the latter prophets—is meant to open our eyes to the inmost cause of all our troubles, and reveal the love of God which becomes ours through the daily submission of our wills to the Divine Will, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

The Saving Power of Faith

Chapter 1. The first words of "the latter prophets" intimate the Savior's concern for "the celestial, the good of love, "-the love of God among men, represented by Judah and Jerusalem. "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." We are obsessed by the love of self, and, in our latter years, we are beginning to see it with a vengeance. Here at last is the vision of the damnable state of our hearts, and of our worship of the Lord. Like children unconscious of all that their parents have done for them, we have forgotten that the Lord ever did anything for us, and hold Him responsible for all our woes. "The ox knoweth his owner, but Israel doth not know The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint Your country is desolate." The deportation of the ten tribes had begun. We imagine we are beyond evil through self-justification. Yet, nothing is right. The only thing that checks an outright denial of God is the thought of cowardice on our part should we let others down by deserting them altogether, or by quitting the fight because our lot appears to be unreasonably hard. That is a saving remnant—a vague childlike trust in God hidden deep beneath the surface. What wonder that our worship of God is a mere show of religion! An empty profession of faith! A perfunctory repetition of rituals! Prayers -without point! The whole situation is remediable, but we cling to evils that are part and parcel of our being, and that seem to be unquenchable, or invincible. "The great arraignment," as this chapter has been entitled, carries weight as it spurs us on to analyse our states of mind to better purpose. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

2. Humiliation effects a temporary exaltation with a vision of what life might be if we loved others as the Lord has loved us. But, at present, the vision is far beyond our grasp. Self love, opinionatedness, the pride of learning, and the love of gain occupy the centre, and the love of the Lord is at the circumference.

In practice, conflicting interests make it impossible for men to pull together. Social security is only a dream, which vanishes instantly on the appearance of terrifying fears that our own interests may shortly be destroyed.

Self-Interest Is Ubiquitous

3. How sorely we lack courage and the knowledge of ourselves and of the world in meeting the tempter. Judah and Jerusalem are without sustenance and leaders. "Children are princes, and babes rule the people." Everyone childishy oppresses his neighbor for personal advantages. Lie is shameless ill wrongdoing. "They have rewarded evil unto themselves." The Lord is ever ready to plead our cause, but we are ill-disposed toward others, and averse to the spirit of humility. We "grind the faces of the poor" in spirit. The haughty daughters of Zion represent the common tendency in self-seeking to pervert the truths of the Word, mistaking anger for indignation, lust for zeal, etc. Innate evils are indulged in secret. They cast deep shadows over our lives, and make us very unhappy. The Lord comes to expose them, with all the trappings used to make them attractive and inciting. Our humiliation is trying and discomfiting.

4. "And in that (lay seven women shall take hold of one man," appealing to him to take away their reproach. With the coming of the Lord feelings sacred to us from childhood impel us to turn to Christianity for a practical solution of our problem. We find it there. "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." The Lord comes to the childlike heart with a passion to put an end to our perversion of the truth, "to wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion," and to be true to the teaching of the Gospel, nevermore to be angry, or lustful, etc.

5. Then may we rejoice in the return of better feelings toward others. We visualise again the possibilities of brotherliness in our midst. Yet, again, we fail to live as we pray. The vine yields wild grapes instead of sweet grapes. Individualism and nationalism appear with stern warnings to all comers to keep off our preserves. Look out for the guns and airplanes! The present world situation is just an enlargement of a miniature conflict of human interests inviting settlement by force, dethroning reason. The Lord looks for judgment, but behold oppression. Woe be to those who gloat on self-aggrandisement! Woe to those who revel in fanciful interpretations of the Word, and ignore the straightforward and simple lessons of life in it. When deaf to correction they worsen the situation; but not beyond the range of Providence. Excesses are as danger posts to the openminded. The greater the excess, or perversion, the bolder the lettering on the sign post. "The Lord will lift up an ensign to the nations from far," to warn and save those who are impressionable, and love freedom.

6. Uzziah "was a leper unto the day of his death." Hypocrisy is spiritual leprosy. The inner and the outer life are out of gear. Isaiah's vision "in the year that king Uzziah died" reveals the glory of the Lord in heaven and on earth. And the prophet cried, "Woe is me! for I am unclean; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king: the LORD of hosts." The lips were cleansed, the iniquity taken away, and sin purged by the touch of a live coal from the altar upon his lips. Even so the evil in the inner life is cleansed as evil is shunned in the outer life. The perpetual flame in the altar of burnt sacrifices is a symbol of the zeal kept alive in the effort to do God's will on earth, as in heaven. We may wander far from the path of duty, we may reach the limit of desolation and despair, but within shall be that "tenth," the "remnant" that returns to work out our salvation. "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

Isaiah's Sons Symbolize Childhood Innocence Recaptured

7. Our love of God is being put to the test more and more in preparation for still severer tests that are to follow. Here Syria and Ephraim conspire to break into Jerusalem, and place a stranger on the throne of David. False reasoning and misinterpretation of the Scriptures combine to break down our morale, weakening our love of God, and our sense of justice. The Scriptures assure us that this goes too far. Jerusalem may be destroyed, but the house of David may not perish. There shall never fail a man to sit on the throne of David. "A remnant will return" (Shear-jashub is with Isaiah), and God Himself will make His abode with us (Immanuel will come). This prophetic sign is vouchsafed to renew our courage when conflicting ideas and senseless reasoning menace the very life of religion. Many a bitter conflict may rage within, and many a lapse in conduct follow, and yet the reign of love will survive every attack upon it and grow, so long as the effort to live unselfishly according to God's Word exists. "Butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land," that he "may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Butter gives heat and energy to the body, and honey is sweet to the taste. (Ps. 119:103.)

8. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me," saith Isaiah, "are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion." (v. 18.) Here is the key to this and the preceding chapter. The prophet tells us that our "greater love" for others will be put to the severest tests, "because we are unwilling to accept the Word in simplicity." (v. 18.) Our comfort rests in the conviction that "the remnant will return" (Shear-jashub), and that the good taken captive by the enemy shall be recaptured. God speed the day when we snatch it out of the very jaws of hell! That is Maher-shalal-hash-baz -"speed spoil, hasten prey." "Take thee a great roll, and write this with a man's pen." There can be no misunderstanding of the decree, faithfully witnessed by Uriah, the priest, (meaning "Jah is light"), and Zechariah, (meaning "whom God remembers"). The "light of love" and "the remembrance of the Lord" in our blessings testify to the truth of the prophecy. God's Word will not fail us in any extremity, if only we sustain the endeavor to be faithful to it.

"Unto Us a Child Is Born"

Here follows further testimony of prophecy. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." The more we ponder over the promised advent of the Prince of Peace and the increase of His government and peace, the stronger is its hold upon us in these later conflicts of life. Again and again our weaker nature will assert itself, and will "falsify and pervert every truth and good of the Word and thus of the church even until nothing remains." But these relapses, common to everyone especially in his secret thoughts, only challenge us to make a closer analysis of our thoughts and feelings to uncover the perversions, and register a sturdy condemnation of them. The Lord never overtakes our strength, or our intelligence. Three times appear these blessed words: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The power of recovery in temptation is always within our reach.

10. This chapter is a searching analysis of self-imposed sufferings due to the common practice of picking other people to pieces, and secretly, or openly, laying down the law for them. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed." Then is our opportunity to see in part wherein our spirit of self-righteousness is at work robbing others of much good in them,

pervverting the truth, and abusing our rational faculty. A passing judgment of our own guilt restores in part our innocence. "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." "The high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled."

11. Self-judgment does yet more for us. It opens the way for the coming of the Lord as our Savior, imparting innocence, a new understanding of the Word, and freedom from the hurt of pitiless thoughts. The gathering of the Gentiles, and the remnant and the outcasts of Israel attests the rectification of innumerable mistakes made in ignorance. Instruction is welcomed -when given in the right spirit.

12. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." With joy we own the saving grace of the Lord.

Crosses to Be Taken Up

13. Again the Lord unveils the repulsive nature of the love of forcing others to serve us, or the endeavor to have our own way in preference to God's way. This is "the burden of Babylon which Isaiah saw." To see the burden is to see the load, the cross-we must bear in giving up self-will for God's will.

The Lord alone can relieve us of the burden, that is, with our cooperation, but not without it. It is a frightful picture. "Every one that is found shall be thrust through, and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword, Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes: their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished." These scenes are common in time of war. They would be impossible if our passions had been brought under control through the Spirit of the Lord. As it is, self-will at times plunges us into hell, "with its direful and horrid evils and falsities," to remain there so long as we disdain correction and help.

14. Human nature abhors correction, or change. We even challenge God to set us right when conscience pricks a long established evil within on the rampage. "O Lucifer, thou hast said in thine heart, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will be like the most High!" To see the picture true to life within, and then look to the Lord for deliverance, brings certain judgment and relief.

Next follows the burden of Palestina, or Philistia -the judgment upon the pride of learning. When the evil spirits responsible for this common delusion are removed in answer to our entreaty, "the church will be safe."

15, 16. "The burden of Moab." Another cross! We all on occasion make more of the outside than of the inside, in one form or another. We think more of the raiment than of the body, -more of the meat than of the life. We despise those who think otherwise. We are ourselves under judgment until we rectify our error. There is power in reading this and the next chapter with this thought in mind. The power of the Word increases with a growing knowledge of the imagery in the prophecy, and definite knowledge of the spiritual Moabite in ourselves. This point applies to prophecy in general. The truth is hidden in the language of parable, and gradually appears in the light, as we enter into the life of it. The Lord permits the evils in the heart to come to the surface, and speaks to us through His Word as we are able to bear it.

17. "The burden of Damascus," that is, of those who make much of memorising the particular teachings of their religion, or of the inner meaning of the Scriptures. Damascus, in Syria, implies a rational, or irrational, understanding of such knowledge. To make a religion of abstract truths treasured in the memory stigmatizes anyone who fails to accept them without question. Truths so held are like "a ruinous heap," as the city is designated by the prophet. They may be of service to others, but not to ourselves unless put to the test in practical life. Otherwise we lose the power of discriminating the false from the true when presented to us.

18. "Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia." This refers to "those who are willing to be in blind ignorance respecting the things of salvation." Unwilling to have our eyes opened to our own inconsistencies, or infirmities! We thus voluntarily separate ourselves from the Lord, and may only draw near to Him again when smitten with regret for our contumacy and ignorance.

19. "The burden of Egypt." Another cross to be taken up! The worship of memory-knowledges, like the worship of money, as an end in itself, and not a means to an end, generates interminable strife. It leads to the perversion of the truth, and to insanity, and not to added intelligence. It spells death-total insensibility to the right use of knowledge as the only justification of its accumulation. The "right use" is determined by reason actuated by religion. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land."

20. This chapter specifies a common abuse of knowledge in senseless talk for no good. Futile speculation on current events! Gossip! Naked and barefoot Egypt!

21. "The burden of the desert of the sea." This concerns "the emptiness of memory-knowledges which are not for use." (A. 3048.) We may, for example, get into a discussion, and take up a position that is called in question, "A whirlwind in the south passes through." With eagerness we draw upon the memory for support to our argument, and use material that is valueless. We are unwilling to give in. However, we "set a watchman to declare what he seeth." Conscience tells us that our feelings are not right, and that our position is untenable. Then appeared a chariot and two horsemen with the report that Babylon has fallen. We capitulate.

"The burden of Dumah." The cross that lifteth up the head in this instance teaches us that light dispels darkness to the gentile mind in penitence, even after the repetition of the same fault in ignorance. Habit is second nature, until a new habit is established through painstaking reeducation. "If ye will enquire, enquire: return, come."

"The burden of Arabia." Living in expectation of the Lord's coming, "those who are in ignorance will have knowledge of good and truth" according to their needs, after winnowing many old ideas, and separating the useful from the useless. Our thinking in the abstract is a process that needs straining all the time to purify it.

22. "The burden of the valley of vision," the cross of prideful self-intelligence. We imagine that our solution of problems about which we profess to know something is infallible; that our criticism is unanswerable, that we have the best interests of others at heart, and that the Lord is therefore on our side. Our concept of life in general and in particular is superficial and faulty. We often fail miserably to square it with the teachings of the Word. We should weep and mourn, if forced to face the light.

Instead, we stick to many crazy ideas. They are all right, no matter what anyone may say or think about them! We are digging our own graves. The power of the Word within remains inviolate, guarded by the Lord, while self-intelligence without has disdained to lift the burden, at least for the time being.

23. "The burden of Tyre." Tyre was once the mercantile centre of the world, and furnished most of the material for building Solomon's temple-gold, wood, stone, and precious stones. The world furnishes us by the grace of God with materials to build our concept of the ideal life. What the Lord Jesus Christ means to us is largely dependent on our knowledge of what is best in human character drawn from literature, or from personal contact with our fellow men. Somehow, sometime, we feel that we are very small and mean in the light of cherished memories. It is a hard cross to bear. "Howl ye ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in." He who withstands the trial comes through all the richer for it. "Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord:" purged of worldliness.

The Blessings of Deliverance

24. Frequently one trial leads to another; work on a definite problem may be followed by undefined feelings; discontent, irritability, malaise. We are all out of sorts, and cannot tell what is the matter with us. The light-heartedness of the unthinking is gall to us. We may hug our distemper, because we are unable to diagnose the cause clearly. It is enough, however, to take several thoughts that are the most pronounced disturbers of the peace, set them aside for judgment, and get into the sunshine again as soon as possible. Then we may be surprised to discover how much suffering we might have been saved had we only taken the bull by the horns sooner. "Then the moon shall blush and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and shall be glory for his ancients.

25. Now follows our confession of the Lord's mercies in delivering us from evil, removing our sorrows, raising us on to the heights again, and giving us a clearer insight into the permissions of evil for the greater good of all. We may need to wait long before we experience complete freedom from any given evil to which we have been prone, after the defense of it has been broken down, and "laid low, even to the dust."

26. It is one thing to rejoice in our quite another to rejoice in the power of religious convictions, but the truth which saves us from evil. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It is a mistake to compromise with evil when it is plainly in sight. "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." We pass through many trials, and gain nothing from them so long as our prayers and effort are insincere. Failures are reminders to clear our sight, and strengthen our purpose, until "the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity."

27. The Lord protects the spiritual life in man from "the reasonings from fallacies whence come falsities," as in scandal, or 'Corrupt politics, (leviathan, the serpent and dragon). The fallacies and falsities come to the surface for judgment, to the enrichment of the church and the worship of the Lord.

Pride in Our Understanding of the Truth

28. "The crown of pride! The drunkards of Ephraim!" We what this means in our young people. They often know not where they are, or where they are going. You cannot tell them anything: they know it all. We imagine that we have outgrown these youthful pretences, and the folly of them. In reality, we have learned the art of hiding them to save our reputation. Occasionally we are more tractable. Earlier states of innocence are revived, and life is brighter. "In that day the Lord was for a of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people." The Lord, however, exposes the "woe to the crown of pride" from time to time to restore our sanity. "Give ye ear and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

Faith Assailed by Self-Will, Reason and Knowledge

29. Ariel means "lion of God." The Lord is called "the lion of the house of Judah, the root of David," to represent the power of the truth to redeem the world. "Woe to Ariel, the city where David dwelt," reflects trouble within through a lost vision of the New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines; or, rather, of what this world might be through the practical application of these doctrines to life. False ideologies are in the ascendancy, and it is useless, in some places even dangerous, to question or oppose them. We all suffer through the loss of interest in the Church, and her teachings, and need to feel it to revive our faith in the Lord. Then "they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

30. "Woe to the rebellious children." Judah is threatened by Assyria, and seeks the aid of Egypt, contrary to Isaiah's advice. The people should trust in the Lord. In time of adversity we are sorely tempted to put our trust in knowledge, (Egypt), and our own learning, (horses), rather than "in quietness and confidence." By knowledges here is understood truth, or doctrine, in the abstract, or without a real practical meaning. The latter half of the chapter shows why the rebellious heart should return to the Lord, and rest in Him. The Lord turns to those who trust in Him, shews them what to do, and frees them from specious reasoning to exculpate self, and justify procrastination.

31. "Woe unto them that go down into Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots." An old familiar evil is at the door. It is untouchable. We claim immunity for it. But, 'When it is seriously challenged, rather than admit blame, we resort to the Bible and the doctrines, as to an opiate, to soothe our conscience. This corrupts our religion by substituting thought and feeling for action. As a matter of fact, when we hate the evil in our hearts, and put our shoulder to the wheel to get it out of the rut, the excuses we fear to touch no longer appear to be sacrosanct, and in time cease to have further influence over us. "Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him, and his young men shall become tributary

Faith Reestablished

32. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." Character is cleared in part from pretence. But the wound remains; there is still swelling to subside, and matter to be removed, before it is healed. The evil is there, and much more evil besides. But, each experience in the regenerate life, and the present experience in particular, assures us that "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

33. "Woe to thee that spoilest." This refers to the Assyrian, that is, to one who gets rid of the truths of the Church by false reasonings; or one, for example, who justifies a temper and impatience as zeal for decency, or good behavior. The justification of any evil to which we are prone destroys the power of the truth to save, like insects devastating the fields. We never feel the bad effect upon character until we stop, self-justification, and look at ourselves in the light. How do we feel when others are impatient with us? Our first reaction is generally to return it with interest. But second thought, and a clearer recognition of what is happening in ourselves, brings penitence. The Lord will be gracious, and disperse the evil. Then again, we see yet more of the evil in the light, but the Lord is our judge and Savior. "The people who dwell in the land shall be forgiven their iniquity."

34. "Come near ye nations to hear; and hearken ye people: . . . for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion." This chapter "describes a last judgment upon all who are in evil and in falsities therefrom." We are more often unhappy and in hell than we realise. We give a free rein to moods that are ancient, but not honorable. We recognise their character, and bear our cross patiently, until relief arrives.

35. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." We discover a new joy in a world that is barren and forbidding, a new sympathy for the destitute and outcast, the poor, and the unhappy rich, the sick and the criminal, the sinner and the self-appointed saint. There is hope for the world. For "the way of holiness" is there, "and the ransomed of the Lord shall return by it, and come to Zion with songs; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Philanthropy as a Relief under Strain

36-39. The chief difference between the next four chapters and 2 Ki. 18:13 to 20:19 is in the addition of Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving upon his recovery in Isa. 38:9-20. The two incidents which these chapters record alike in a different setting are the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, and Hezekiah's recovery from sickness. We have long felt the force of arguments justifying self-will, and repelled them, but deeper evils have come to light, and give a new lease of life to false reasons favorable to them. We are in their grip, unwilling to capitulate. Israel is captive in Assyria. And now a frontal attack is made upon our belief in God. Evil spirits assault our love and worship of God. The heart is held in contempt for its weakness. The Word of God, (Isaiah), insists that we have nothing to fear from the most subtle arguments against the life of religion. The destruction of the Assyrian hosts and the assassination of Sennacherib by his own sons is proof positive. But Hezekiah is sick unto death. The heart is sick: our faith in the law of love is weak, but not dead. We are in a hard place, the love of God is strained to the limit, the least increase in the pressure of self-interest would break the tie. Relief comes by diverting our attention

to the pressing claims of suffering humanity. Something must be done about it. "Place a lump of figs on the boil, and he shall recover." And so the king's life was lengthened—twice seven years and then another. There is worse to follow, but strength given to meet it.

The remaining chapters of Isaiah fall into three sections. The first stresses the acknowledgment of the Lord as our deliverer from self-will (Babylon), through the agency of his Divine Human; (cc. 40-48); the second centers attention on the Lord's sufferings, foreshadowing our tribulations as followers in His footsteps, (49-57); and the third announces the glorious restoration of the church through the conquest over evil, (58-66). The three hold together as do the end, the cause, or means, and the effect; or the will, understanding, and life. Bear this in mind when studying them, Each section closes with a solemn declaration that good and evil cannot live together. Evil must be cast without, that good may dwell within.

The Will to Do God's Will a Settled Habit

40. How salutary is the message to everyone who knows what it means to be released even in part from a domineering disposition. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. . . . for Jerusalem hath received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins." The remnant has returned from Babylon. We have touched bottom: we know in a measure how deceitful and wicked the heart is. The practice of shunning evils as sins has been established, to be kept up daily opening the way for the Lord's entrance into our lives more and more. The flesh profiteth nothing, when contrasted with the Lord's tender love for us. How infinite is His wisdom too, in comparison with our short-sighted plans for influence or gain! Nor are his ways altogether beyond understanding. Self-interest may quicken the pace in the world's work, but has in itself no staying power. We see the hand of Him "who slumbers not nor sleeps" every time He renews our will to withstand opposition, and carry on to the finish the work He has given us to do.

41. Proof of this is found in the Lord's own life. He perfected His Human, despite unparalleled antagonism, through a perpetual renewal of the will to do the will of the Father within even to the end. His Human is "my servant" referred to in verses 8-16. In like manner He will strengthen all who confide in Him. Hundreds of thoughts issuing from an impure heart every day must be challenged, found wanting, and rejected. It is hard labor, requiring recuperation from time to time. Both the light and the strength to do our work are from the Lord. Without Him all is "vanity: our works are nothing: our molten images are wind and confusion."

42. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." The Lord Jesus Christ gently leads and teaches us. He is our Savior. He fights for us against the hells, and destroys their power over us. He opens our eyes to see wondrous things out of his law, and removes conceit from the heart. He is patient, merciful and just, though we often fail to appreciate it, or even complain.

43. "Redemption and salvation of those from every quarter who will be of the new church from the Lord." He opens the way before us, to surmount every difficulty, and profit by every disappointment, or failure. Yet we often magnify our difficulties and nurse our grievances beyond reason. We disdain the blessings at our very door. We fail to honor the Lord with our sacrifices. We "weary Him with our sins." Like wayward children we deliberately prefer disjunction and vexation to unity and good cheer.

44. When our willfulness has about spent itself we hear the plea, "Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." This is a definite promise of the Holy Spirit by "the Lord, the king of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts," beside whom there is no God. He who is in the love of self denies God, and places his confidence in his own opinions, or beliefs, or works, or pleasures. "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" It is possible to see wherein we err, and be forgiven and worship the Lord alone as we are freed from self-worship and its delusions, Cyrus, the Persian, freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. The worshipper of self sees the way out of captivity in the revelation of "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

45. "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus." It was ordained that the Divine Human should liberate us from servitude to self-will. The Word is dynamic when taken to, heart, and proclaims the power of the Lord as the only God of heaven and earth. No doubt on the point is tenable, "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" The Lord alone saves man from hell. "Man is born for heaven. In the Lord alone is all the life of heaven."

46. Selfish considerations (the idols of Babylon) can save no man. We instantly perceive the folly of appealing to idols of gold, or silver, for the good of life. It is still greater folly to expect lasting satisfaction in pursuing any objective in life that can only be gratified at the expense of the well-being of others. Why do we fail to see it? "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry., and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel, my glory." Israel always represents the spiritual life in man, and Jacob the natural life.

47. We have come out of Babylon, so to speak, but are still far from being free from the domineering spirit which that city represents. The Word exists to shew us the perfidy of it, framing lies to obtain its object by force, or fear. Even the church is infected with this same heinous spirit, arrogating equality with God, approving the orthodox and condemning the heterodox. It is the greatest scandal in the world that men professing to be Christians cannot pull together. Moreover, this spirit attempts to escape judgment, appealing to the service it renders to others in extenuation, but in vain. (Witness on a large scale how the more powerful nations justify their domination over weaker nations, and how some churches claim superiority over all others.) The life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ stand out in an unqualified condemnation of this spirit.

48. "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel." The Lord exhorts us herein to desist from desecrating the good life He gave us, and the teachings of the Church which we confess with our lips. To "turn every one to his own way" of necessity dishonors the Father in heaven. We see children continually disregarding the instruction of their parents and teachers, sometimes even deliberately. They know little better. We ought to know how serious is our offence. We are not superior to others, yet of the Lord's mercy we are preserved to prove that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth to whom we owe allegiance for the peace of the world. No compromise with self-will is admissible at the crossroads, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked."

The Word Feeds the Will

49. "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from far; The Lord called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name, . . . and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." This second section of the latter part of the prophecy is an entreaty to think through the teaching of the Lord's glorification in its relation to the outmost affairs of men-the isles and remote peoples. This covers every intermediate point to the farthestmost limit. What does the Lord's ascension mean to us, and to all men, in daily life? It appears to be a vain question. It has a partial and obvious answer in the doctrinal teaching of the church in regard to salvation. The church has not appreciated the practical side of the doctrine beyond the verbal definition of it. The simple-hearted will learn, however, that the lord cares for them, and changes their lives. He will be a light to lead them to Himself, and protect them in temptation.

50. Unfortunately, we who have the doctrine are not applying it to life as is expected of us. The substitution of our orthodoxy, or devotion to the Church, for the life of religion, is a practical denial "that the Divine has power to save, wherefore all things of the church are hidden" from us at that time, or in that state of mind, by crassness and obstinacy. It is a fatal mistake. We have many a lesson to learn from the unpretentious gentile, or non-Christian.

51. At other times, however, we look to the Lord, and take home a lesson from the Church for life, which gives us real joy, only that which is from and of the Lord in us is abiding. Nor should we fear opposition from without or from within in upholding the right as God gives us to see it. The Lord has power to save, and will gradually establish order in the world. The truth will in time gain force, and falsity pass into the distant background, until lost sight of altogether. We have all witnessed changes of this order in science-and to some extent in religious beliefs too.

52. The New Christianity is roused to embrace the truth, separated from all defilements, and especially from the justification of evils that held man in bondage aforetime, to his sorrow. Whosoever will may know that God is here among men from the message of peace, and goodwill and salvation which has a different ring to it than heretofore. These blessings cannot be had for the asking, or by faith alone, but only by following the way of the cross to the complete sacrifice of the self-life. This after the example of the Lord bowing the heavens, and coming down for our salvation.

53. The world is barely conscious of the fact-not in theory, but in actual practice-that the omnipotence of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The belief in practice is the only belief that counts. judged by that the Lord appeared like an ordinary man, despised and rejected by his fellowmen. But, when judged by His achievements in the spirit, He felt the force of every evil to which the flesh is heir without a murmur, and without giving way to it. The stature of this Man for us approaches the Divine as we realise our impotence in our attempt to follow in his footsteps; for it is "by his stripes that we are healed," He did not suffer in our stead. He "makes intercession for the transgressors" by conferring the power to endure and to overcome evil as He overcame it, when asked "in His Name," that is, in the same spirit in which He received it from the Father within-through humiliation and effort to do the will of God.

54. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." Deep humiliation reveals to us that our past efforts to do God's will have been rather fruitless. Our method has been wrong. We now rejoice in the truth of new and better conceptions of fulfilling the law. New methods, and a new spirit promise extensive growth of the church,

making amends for past failures. This close union with the Lord renews our courage. We are far from perfect, and have made many terrible blunders, but we are happy in sensing the Lord's loving kindness in the effort to do better, and in the assurance that we can withstand any test. The Lord is on our side.

55. In this bright state of mind we hail the invitation to regale our spirits with the blessed teachings of the Word. Why should we "labor for the meat that perisheth," when we can actually share the Lord's own presence with us in intimate fellowship renewing our vision of the possibilities of life before us in a clearer light, and reassuring us that no message that comes to us through His Word for Christian living will be fruitless. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "Through this alone is heavenly happiness, and instead of evil and falsity there is good and truth to eternity."

56. We cannot, however, live on the mountain top always, The vision of further progress in life can only be made permanent through the practice of justice, unpolluted by any thought of self-righteousness. We should cooperate more freely with non-Christians, or nonconformists, than with anti-Christians. Even those who think wrongly in ignorance merit our sympathy and understanding. For all of them may be introduced into the worship of "the Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel:" they have been unwittingly seduced by unprincipled and self-indulgent leaders. This implies a broadening of character in evaluating Christian living regardless of sectarian boundaries.

57. Deep humiliation effects great exaltation. But, it is also followed by deeper insight into evils within. We return to old evil habits that were regarded as perfectly justifiable. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart. He goes in peace." But now comes a secret impulse to "draw near hither" and investigate the despicable conditions beneath and behind these old habits of which we had been wholly unconscious. We never could be convinced that we were wrong, because we regarded our own ideas as infallible. Our self-justifications were sacrosanct. No one dared question them, much less call for a retraction. We were dead to the meaning of these facts. Now we see it, and in humility and grief seek the Lord for instruction, and for the complete removal of the evil revealed to, us. Again, there can be no compromise. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Holy Living with the Lord's Help Is Possible for Everyone

58. We take up the last section of this prophecy. The process of eliminating the deeper evils within is slow and exceedingly trying. We complain that we "afflict our souls," and the Lord takes no notice of it. Little wonder, because we grieve, and at the same time rake up the old arguments to justify inaction and self-pity. We fast for strife and debate. The Lord requires us to come out with a straightforward admission of wrong on our part, an honest hatred of it, and then He can give us a new spirit in our approach to suffering humanity. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily." We call, and the Lord answers, and guides us in "building the old waste places, and raising up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." The union of the Lord with the church in holy living is heaven.

59. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." We know that from experience, yet evil persists. Weeds come to the surface so long as there is a shred of root left in the ground. We still hate others, and entertain many ugly thoughts about them. We lie

misrepresenting our own actions and speech in our after thoughts in the effort to exculpate ourselves in the eyes of the world. We uphold injustice, trust in riches, and dislike those who take exception to our opinions, or plans. Our thoughts are sometimes impure, or contentious, and our ways crooked. We are in a very sad plight indeed, without light or guidance. We are unhappy. "We look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us." We have more work ahead than we can accomplish in years, and know it. Even so, the Lord found none to sustain Him at the end. The chosen twelve forsook Him, and fled. Wherefore He put on "the garments of vengeance, and his own arm brought salvation unto him." We likewise gather strength in life's conflicts as we practice repentance daily, and turn all the energy spent in the service of mammon into a well directed effort to learn the truth about ourselves, and defeat our enemies within, to the advantage of our children, and children's children, who must continue the fight in years to come.

60. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It was night when we were sounding the depths of evil within. The glory of the Lord enlightening the redeemed appears all the brighter for the contrast. At last the Church begins to influence well-disposed people everywhere to worship the Lord "in spirit and in truth." The world will give its best to enrich the commonweal, putting up a defence for the higher-interests of all as against the present policy of nationalism and individualism. "Sons of strangers shall build up thy walls." The church itself will keep the city gates open to all comers who desire to contribute anything of real value to the home in which we live as joint tenants in the service of the All-Father. Testimony to the blessings of unity will continually add to the joy of the new culture. But, above all, the better understanding of the Lord's life "makes the place of his feet glorious." Religion has been under fire for a long, long time, but many who never thought much of it are rallying round the cross of Christ today for conflict in a cause worthy of everything man has to give for it. It raises everything that he learns to a higher plane in the interest of peace and justice. The love of God shall rule supreme with growing intelligence in giving expression to it, under the aegis of the Lord Himself.

61. The Lord's coming was in time, yet not of time. His Spirit is ever actively spreading the gospel, healing broken hearts, liberating addicts to evil habits, providing a way of escape ill temptation, comforting the sufferer, and filling the heart with joy and praise. The Spirit is constantly in evidence restoring everything in the church that had been destroyed, and in the world without, strengthening the life of charity and initiating plans for better social and occupational work. Specially prepared servants of the Lord superintend the spiritual interests of the community. These undeserved changes for the better at the hand of Providence restore joy to the world, particularly on account of the promise of increased justice and praise for the generations that are to come.

62. We have, first, the assurance that "the people outside the church who are not in possession of the Word have light by its means." "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light." (S. 104.) Second, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to build the old wastes," to repair the breaches in the church. And, third, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goeth forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Those who are on the inside effect contact with those on the outside that all may consciously and spontaneously cooperate in the living church to rejuvenate the old world. "They will not be separated from the Lord, as before, but conjoined with Him. This gospel will be preached even until it takes place. Then the truths of the Word will not be for those who falsify them, but for those who receive them." Preparation for this has begun in removing many obstacles to it, and in raising a new standard of life for

all peoples to live by. As soon as the nations take up the life of religion seriously the demand for the technique will be as great as the present demand for a better technique in every other department of human endeavor. "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken."

63. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" The road to glory for the New Church and the New Earth in the future is through suffering. "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" As it was for the Master, so must it be for the disciple. "I have trodden the winepress alone. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." The hatred of evil was weighted against the loving kindness of the Father within, and his tender regard for his children in their affliction, still his children, though they "had rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit." How touching the appeal of the Human: "Look down ;from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy mercies' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance." Power always does return in answer to prayer and effort.

64. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down," and be present with us in humility! Ours is the power to repel evil, "to make known thy name to thine adversaries, to do terrible things which we looked not for;" and ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, "O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." The Lord saves the faithful, though the experience in confronting pet evils may be long and painful. We are obdurate, and unwilling to admit our guilt. Only an unreserved confession and deep repentance for the part we have taken in the desolation of God's home on earth can reveal his presence in our afflictions.

65. "I have offered answers to those who asked not; I have been at hand to those who sought me not: I said Behold me, unto a nation that hath not called upon my name. The Lord is present with us when we are perverse and foolish. He is close to us even when we degrade ourselves by the not uncommon reflection, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." The Lord sees the trouble we bring upon ourselves, and longs to help us see our errors and save us from the consequences of them. Fortunately, the Church is preserved to uphold the law of justice, and "my people that have sought me" have learned the meaning of that law by hard experience. But, for those who did not answer when called, or hear when spoken to through conscience, "but did evil before mine eyes," nothing can avert the harm that follows. Nevertheless, the Spirit of the Lord is constantly in operation to renovate the world through the conquest of evil, and bring joy to man instead of woe. And as soon as momentum for reconstruction is well under way, "it shall come to pass, that before men call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." A well trained conscience detects the existence of evil in the thoughts as soon as they appear in the mind, so that evil can do no further harm.

66. "Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool." Heaven and the church exist in those who live according to the law in humility. Worship for form's sake is a snare and a delusion. The Pharisee may deride the publican's prayer, but the latter "went down to his house justified rather than the other." The worship and love of God in time of need brings rich reward. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." True worship yields new concepts of life, lasting joy, peace and comfort after a healthy purgation of selfish thoughts and purposes. "They that sanctify themselves shall be consumed together, saith the Lord." "Men will draw near to the Lord from all parts, and from every religion. They will

be in all truth and doctrine of the church, and in its good." Heaven and the church is in them. Their worship of the Lord is pure and abiding after having seen, condemned, and been delivered from everything that savors in the least degree of a holier-than-thou spirit, the spirit "of the men that have transgressed against the Lord."

Jeremiah

Unmasking the Love of Dominion

The attempt to rule mankind by might looks more serious today than in the days of Napoleon, or Julius Caesar. The world, however, is more enlightened as to the nature of the menace. The love of dominion from the love of self is here for judgment. It is diametrically opposed to the love of God, or the love of dominion from the love of use, not for the sake of self, but for the sake of the common good. The former may often be mistaken for the latter. It is important to know both well, and to separate the two, for "he who subjugates the love of dominion from the love of self, easily subjugates all other evil loves, because it is their head." (P. 146.) "The latter prophets" turn the limelight on "Babylon the Great," the leading representative of this root of all kinds of evil.

Humility Precedes Enlightenment

Chapter 1. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the time of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem into captivity. The discovery of a long lost book of the law in Josiah's reign started a great reformation. This revival and the subsequent decadence and captivity form the background of this prophecy. Jeremiah saw clearly the cause of his people's decline, and yearned to sound the alarm, and save them from the impending fall, but felt incompetent to say the word. A touch of the Divine hand upon his lips, however, conferred the power of speech without fear or favor for the best interests of the last remnant of a great nation. And so humility, and an irrepressible desire to do something to be different and make the world different, open the mind to the meaning of prophecy and its bearing upon evils within that are the source of all the disorder in the world. The vision of the rod of an almond tree, the first to blossom in the spring, is reassuring. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Trouble is nigh, a heartburning of alarming intensity. The word comes to uncover the complete collapse of the church, or of religion itself, under pressure from the love of dominion, Babylon will invest Jerusalem with intent to destroy her defences, and exterminate her kings, and princes, and priests and people. "They shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

Self-Surrender Precedes Regeneration

2. It is impossible to unfold even the general significance of the numerous details of this lengthy prophecy. It is enough that we take note of the leading points in each chapter, always bearing in mind the main theme of the whole book. Jeremiah sees the inevitable fall of Jerusalem, because the people refuse to mend their ways. That is Babylon -an unwillingness to admit that we are ever in the wrong. The only hope for the people is to surrender, and go into captivity. Our only hope is to give in, accept our punishment in meekness, and learn to submit our wills to the Divine will. We are often wrong in speech and action, when certain that we are right; and perhaps as often wrong in the spirit, when upholding the right in action. It is

frightfully humiliating to face the light, and try to walk in it, for it pierces the most sensitive spot in our nature, the love of self-the selfish bit of us that is our very life, and that nobody dare touch, or even challenge.

The Lord shewed kindness to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and in bringing them into a land of plenty, and pled with them for spurning "the fountain of living waters," and hewing out "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but ill the time of their trouble they will say, Come and save us." What inconsistency! What simplicity! "Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." We simply cannot admit our guilt. In the sight of heaven this is sheer adultery.

3. The prophet complains of the great pollution of the land by harlotry. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers." Backsliding Israel committed adultery, and was taken into captivity, through her estrangement from the Lord in this way. "Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married to you, and I will heal your backslidings." Essential harlotry is the adulteration, or falsification, of the truth. The spirit of Babylon is in evidence when men are unwilling to understand the truth about themselves, and opposed to the reformation of character. "Those who will be of the new church will acknowledge and confess that they have falsities and evils."

4. The appeal of the prophet is the voice of God-the voice of conscience-for purity of life. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. . . . O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? . . . My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart, . . . for my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." The details in the chapter only intensify the plain message in the words quoted.

5. Jerusalem is safe if a mail that executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth, can be found in it. Unfortunately, the people have been stricken, without grieving. "They have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. . . . Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? . . . Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation. . . . And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours. . . . A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof."

6. "Evil approacheth out of the north, and great destruction." This again and again appears in the prophecy, as in the vision of the seething pot facing the north, the region of thick darkness, or no truth. The north also represents "an obscure state as to the truths of faith." The remnant that returned was not entirely bereft of light. Without it the captivity had had no meaning. The voice of the prophet was never silent. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good

way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken." This obduracy is the spirit of Babylon. We shall see it when the right time is.

Worship Saves No One

7. Again, the prophet calls for repentance at the gates of the temple. Worship therein is no defence. "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely; and come and stand before me :in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. . . . Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. . . . But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear but walked in the counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward; . . . This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth." No further comment is necessary. The spirit shines through the letter, with greater penetration today than yesterday. We see waywardness in everyone; but we ourselves are different! We are very respectable persons! We may make a blanket confession of sin,- "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, etc.," -but use it only as a subterfuge. We know well how sedulously we argue in our thinking to establish an alibi every time we are under conviction through conscience or criticism.

8. The exhumation of the bones of their kings, princes, priests, prophets and inhabitants of Jerusalem for dung is a desecration ,of all the best traditions of the nation. It is symptomatic of the terrible profanation in our pseudo civilisation today of the best that church and state have given to the world in the past. "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. . . . Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down saith the Lord." Unveilings of the depraved state of the heart, set on having its own way at any cost, to the disintegration of society, proceed slowly. The constant violation of the spirit of the law in the thoughts of our hearts, and our repugnance to correction and to change, becomes more and more apparent. The growing conviction of our horribly unchristian character at last prostrates us through remorse and despair.

9. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! . . . Oh that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." We falsify the truth in self-defence. One misrepresentation of the truth leads to another. We appear friendly outwardly when inwardly we distrust nearly everyone. We "walk after the stubbornness of our own hearts." We stupidly nurse our sorrows out of self-pity, and exaggerate the sense of our own importance. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." In these also should be our delight, without, as well as within.

The Folly of Idolatry

10. The way of the world is alluring. Money talks, and would have us regard it as indispensable to all well-doing. The things of this world pass away, only the love of God remains. "All truth is from the Lord. Self-intelligence amounts to nothing at all, and will perish." The enemy from the north is hard by to put an end to our religious pretensions. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and have made his habitation desolate."

Punishment Inseparable from Faithlessness

11. The prophet reminds those in Jerusalem that a curse is inherent in the violation of the law, and a blessing in the possession of the land in obedience to it. The point has been reiterated from generation to generation with an unfailing "Amen" from the lips of the people in response. Nevertheless, they went after other gods to serve them. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape, and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." They shall call upon their gods also and receive no answer. The Lord advised Jeremiah that his own townsmen sought his life. But that may not be, The Lord gives us to see that to silence the voice of conscience would close our partnership with Him.

12. Then arises the question, Why do the wicked prosper? Why are they happy in doing evil? Even boasting over their gains? The boast of a successful dictator is only a reflection of the same frailty in the millions who applaud, -the same millions who would have trampled him under foot if he had failed. Why take any pleasure whatever in doing wrong? Soon or late the consequences are certain to appear. All disorder is evidence of broken laws. "The whole land is desolate, because no man layeth it to heart." We reap just what we sow. When taken to heart we face the almost hopeless task of righting inveterate wrongs beyond recovery. The captivity of Israel and Judah reproduce this hopeless state of mind. Prophecy meets the situation thus: "It shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out of their land I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And if they will diligently learn the ways of my people. . . . then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord." The choice lies with us. To see the situation in the heart is prophetic of a decision for the right. It would be profanation to fly in the face of it.

"Seeing but Not Perceiving" the Truth

13. The prophet dramatizes the experience. To gird oneself is to get ready for action. The prophet's girdle therefore represents the arrangement of the truths of religion to deal with the problem in our hearts, as yet only in intention. Judah refused to hear the Lord's words by his prophets, but "walked in the stubbornness of their heart, after other gods to worship them." The teachings of Christianity are rendered useless when reason proves them to be impractical (i.e. ruinous to self-interest), in modern life! It is expecting too much of anyone today to resist not evil, to forgive seventy times seven, to return good for evil, to sacrifice

everything for one's friends, etc.! The girdle was good for nothing when taken from its hiding place in the rock by the prophet. The bottle filled with wine here represents the mind full of the spiritual teachings of the Word, imbibed to the point of intoxication. Failure, then, to see straight sets conflicting interpretations at variance to the destruction of the solidarity of the church. "A house (of God) divided against itself cannot stand." "Mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. . . . This is thy lot. . . . saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. . . . Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?" There is a part of us within that protests against our weaker self, but still lacks backbone to stand firm for the right.

14. In consequence all instruction from heaven fails altogether. Judah is driven to despair by a great drought. The people pray in vain for deliverance, because they give ear to false prophets. They refuse to accept the truth. Both they and their prophets will suffer. "I will pour their wickedness upon them,...for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow." Nothing is more distressing than a breach in the Church. The prophet intercedes without effect. The pangs of conscience are severe and long, but still ineffectual. The heart will not stiffer correction.

15. They have "made their bed in hell," and automatically severed their connection with the living church. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." They who exist to pull down regard the disinterested service of the Lord's church with contempt. This broke the prophet's heart, and he cried out: "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" We are in a most unhappy frame of mind. And yet, the Divine purpose of God is unalterable. "Thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: . . . for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

16. The church has cut loose from the Lord, and is barren of Christian living. To represent this the prophet is forbidden to marry, or have children. Instead, the Church is fertile in engendering strife and dissension. Force breeds force. The prophet may "not enter into the house of mourning. . . . for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even lovingkindness and mercies." It is very difficult to keep the heart right when involved in partisan and contentious divisions in private or public life, -refrain from participation in the hard feeling and bitter words that spoil the world's teamwork. The prophet shall have nothing to do with their debauchery. Their mirth will turn to sadness. And why? "Because ye walk every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me." Therefore they shall be carried into captivity in a strange land. Again and again we are confronted by the spirit of obstinacy within that seems to be unconquerable. Yet "retribution will visit those who have previously profaned the church, and those of whom the church will consist will acknowledge the Lord."

17. Again, without being able to account for it, we are in the depths. Our distrust in God seems to be ineradicable. Judah's sin is graven on the heart with a pen of iron. We cannot get away from ourselves. "Cursed is the man whose heart departeth from the Lord, . . . and blessed the man whose hope the Lord is." The contrast is evident, but not convincing. Increasing light in meeting life's trials uncovers the dreadful deceitfulness and wickedness in the heart. The wealth of knowledge we possess about our spiritual status is lost to us, if kept out of use. "He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." The Lord is the hope of Israel in the day of evil, to confound our persecutors within, and reject them. That is the day's work. And when the Lord grants us

rest, a temporary surcease from sorrow, let us see to it that we do not spoil it. "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem." Otherwise, our worship loses its virtue. Take what is, and trust what may be.

Providence Continually Withdraws Man from Evil

18. They who do evil, but repent, are like a marred vessel which the potter refashions as seems good to him. They who turn from good to evil destroy the vessel. The cause of religion is seriously injured when churchmen do not repent of their evils. They "make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing, everyone that passeth by shall be astonished, and wag his head." They threaten the life of the prophet craftily. "Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me. Let them be overthrown before thee."

19. The picture is here, that we may see and understand. The earthen bottle is an image of the church as the recipient of the teachings of religion, for us, the Christian life. The prophet shattered the bottle to enforce his arraignment of his people's profanation of their worship in the valley of Hinnom, (Gehenna), which should henceforth be called "The valley of slaughter, "the place of human sacrifices, the receptacle of the offal and filth of the city. What a revolting image of hell! And yet it is far removed from the reality represented. Even so today the slaughter of innocents in warfare is a very imperfect image of the hell in human hearts, callous to the violation of Christianity, at the root of our troubles. Why cannot the nations of the world get together, and Put an end to war, and many other social injustices? Because of the universal desecration of the simplest teachings of Christianity in the individual. "Hell is actually there, because there is nothing but the lust of the love of self." The people have "hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words."

Our Proprium—Our Own Selves

20. Tell any man that he is in the wrong-touch his amour propre-and he is up in arms immediately, although he may conceal his hatred of you to save his reputation. Pashur, the priest, smote Jeremiah, and pilloried him. When released the prophet renamed Pashur Magor-missabib, that is, "Terror on every side." Self love resents correction. And why? Because we dread change. We fear being misunderstood, or opposed, or persecuted, or ostracised. We fear the foe within as well as without. We are all cowards when our right to self-judgment is called in question, and self-surrender is our only hope. The more we claim infallibility, the less we trust anyone. The autocrat cannot tolerate any rival. And we are all autocrats, whether we seek to get our own way by self -assertiveness, or by subserviency. This spirit is Babylon, and must perish to receive the Lord at His Coming. Magor-missabib, and all connected with him, shall be carried into captivity, and die there. We are facing a sore trial when the Word becomes our conscience, The prophet's cry to God tells the story. We defame the Word if we look backward. The Lord is with us if we go forward. But, "wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame."

Surrender When Wrong, and Do Right with God's Help

21. Jeremiah advises the people of Jerusalem to capitulate to Nebuchadnezzar, and escape death. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey," i. e., he shall snatch it from the destroyer. This recalls Maher-shalal-hash-baz in Isa. 8. Jeremiah apparently counsels shameless cowardice. That may be so in the letter, but in the spirit it is altogether different. To resent the charge that we seek first our own interests in life is the way of death: to acknowledge it is the way of life. Both church and state have openly scorned the laws of justice and morality on the plea that the end justifies the means. No power in heaven or earth could convince them that they were wrong, fatally wrong. Dictators and authoritarians in every group, large or small, justify the most atrocious actions or intentions in the interests of peace and order, and nothing short of the individual capitulation will change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, with the Lord's help.

22. Take again, for instance, the individual who is hypersensitive to criticism. He always carries a chip on his shoulder. He takes offence -where no offence is intended. He is the victim of unjust persecution! He hates his enemies, and plots to get even with them, or to withdraw from the field of honor to shame them! Back of all this misunderstanding and resentment is egoism and self-will. We cannot be wrong! God is on our side! These chapters in Jeremiah describe the dawn of a consciousness that we may be wrong, and therefore off God's side. The prophet is told to go down to the house of the king of Judah and assure him that his throne is safe if he sets his house in order; but, if not, disaster is certain to follow. He may build cedar palaces outdoing the splendor of Solomon's reign; but, as a substitute for just rule, it is the token of impotence, and forebodes a downfall. All this images a controversy in the soul. If self-will rules in the issue before us, the love of God will be dethroned, regardless of grandiose professions. We see it all, but table the issue for the present.

23. And so matters must get worse, before the turn of the tide. "Woe be to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord." What is to become of the better feelings in our hearts entrusted to our care by the Lord when self-will declines to surrender? The Lord will not permit the remnant to be lost forever. We do not grasp what this means to us in our extremity, but are referred to our Gospel for enlightenment. The Lord's life has a new and deeper relation to our trials when approached in a sympathetic spirit. He is OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and claims our whole soul as his own. To appreciate this measurably exposes the faithlessness and the absurdity of the arguments used to sustain self-willfulness. The Lord's prophets profane his word, and "cause my people Israel to err. They say unto everyone that walketh after the stubbornness of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." We hate to admit guilt, and imagine that we are still all right. But the Comforter comes to perpetuate the judgment, and expose the lies and false dreams. The "burden," or cross, is there to be borne, until the false prophets -false conscience -have been discredited, and banished from the scene.

24. Two baskets of figs! The basket of good figs represents those who had been "carried away captive of Judah for their good," and will return to the land afterward. But the residue who remained in the land to be driven out of it, and perish, are like "the evil figs, which could not be eaten, they are so evil." So long as we refuse to give in and to admit that we are self-willed the Lord cannot do anything for us, and we bring upon ourselves increased hardship and suffering. But whenever we confess that we have turned to our own ways, hold ourselves responsible for our misdeeds, learn our lesson well, and change our ways with

the Lord's help, our emancipation is guaranteed. This applies to our ordinary contacts with everyone from day to day. This is the significance of the good figs, -actions free from self-will, and accordant with the will of God, good within, as well as without.

Seventy Years in Servitude

25. This purging of the self-life, however, is not effected in a day. The captives were doomed to serve the king of Babylon "seventy years." The association of the number seven is chiefly with that which is holy and sacred, especially after temptation. "Six days shalt thou labor, but the seventh" is the day of rest and worship. The seventy years in captivity imply all the trials from first to last under the oppression of a stubborn self-will, until we cease to profane any and every truth that has any connection with our lives, or, our conscience has been made free and void of offense. The cup which the nations must drink to their ruin typifies the sources whence spring the temptations to take the name 'of the Lord in vain. The surrender of our wills to the will of God to regain our lost innocence is the most painful experience in life, increasing with our approach to the end of the three score years and ten. "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; for the land is desolate, because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger."

26. The strain of submitting our wills to the Divine will is beginning to tell on us. We let down on our job, Then we are reminded that both church and state will fail if we quit. Jeremiah said that the temple and the city would be destroyed if the people refused to obey the voice of the prophet. The priests and prophets demanded the death of Jeremiah, but the elders cited Micah's case in defense of Jeremiah, and the people acquitted him. Urijah, however, was put to death. He upheld the words of Jeremiah, but fled to Egypt when threatened with death. Jeremiah was no coward, and survived the ordeal. Our conscience is stiffened by reflection on past experiences when disinterested loyalty to the still small voice proved to be to the advantage of everyone. Urijah's conduct also has a meaning for us. It is fatal to know our duty, feel proud of our knowledge, and do nothing further about it, but just talk.

27. As children we had to conform to the customs and manners of our social group many times against our will. Advancing years increase the number of situations in which we require to act, or curb the hand or tongue, against our will to keep the peace. The older we grow the more we see in our environment that is contrary to our liking. Every reaction against our will since infancy is recorded in our inner nature. The hateful side of these reactions is cumulatively our unconquered love of dominion from the love of self back of everything wrong within. Touch it, and hell breaks loose. It makes it impossible for the majority of men and women to live too close together. It is the chief source of our own unhappiness whether we are in the crowd, or all alone. And, when we only glimpse the point that "God so loved the world" that He bowed the heavens, and came down to bring life to his wayward children, we behold profanation in our attitude toward everyone and everything, with few exceptions. There is our burden, our cross, graphically represented by the wooden yoke on the neck and shoulders of the prophet, to be borne by the children of Judah in servitude to Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, and the nations subject unto him. We need to protest against the spirit contrary to God's love in Christ in our hearts until it is dissipated. And none save the Lord Himself can remove it from us, and strengthen our love of others, every one of whom stands in need of it, and they who seem least worthy, most of all.

28. Seventy years' servitude! A change of front is a slow and painful process. There are times too when we grow very impatient. It then appears that we can attain our objective—remove the stubbornness in the hearts of our enemies and change the world for the better—by force on short notice. Hananiah claimed that within two years the Lord would restore the temple and the throne of Zedekiah in Jerusalem. In proof of it he took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, and broke it in pieces. But the word of the Lord decreed that Hananiah would substitute yokes of iron for those of wood, which taught revolt against the Lord, "Hananiah died in the seventh month." Experience teaches us that love cannot be forced. Force is justified in restraining wrongdoing and protecting the innocent. It also is always in order in self-compulsion. But it is never justifiable in compelling anyone to do right. To do right through fear is a law of hell, but not of heaven. The iron law of necessity can never put an end to war in the world. The law of love alone is adequate to the task, just plain "charity that suffereth long, and is kind, charity that envieth not, nor is puffed up, nor seeketh her own, nor thinketh evil; charity which beareth all things, and hopeth all things."

29. One thing must now be clear, as the heart is cleansed the eyes see the truth; that is, we see when we are under the influence of the love of dominion from the love of self, and not from the love of use, as we had so often supposed. These opposites are often present in our minds. We see when we are impatient, or hateful, and determined to control others, or have our own way. Then and there we require to desist, and build up a new character, and a new social life; build up the spirit of charity in our hearts in hell's despite, -hell without, as well as hell within. The captives in Babylon were instructed by the prophet in Jerusalem to build houses, and dwell in them, to, plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them, take wives, and beget sons and daughters, "and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." just think of that! Our peace depends upon the constancy of our spirit of submissiveness. We should not be influenced by specious arguments that mislead us, or break down our morale. The tendency to profane the truths we know will in time be subdued, and enable us to correct many misinterpretations of the Word. The will to do God's will carries with it the power to know whether the doctrine is of God, or of self.

The Darkest Hour Is Just before the Dawn

30. Now follows what has been called "The Book of Consolation" for the exiles. (cc. 30-33.) Israel's fears shall have an end. "I will break his yoke from off his neck. . . . and he shall return, and be in rest. . . . and none shall make him afraid Thine adversaries, every one of them shall go into captivity. . . . For I will restore health unto thee." The captives shall return, and rebuild the city. And the Lord will come and execute a judgment upon the wicked. The coming of the Lord in newness of life is not a wholesale experience, but piecemeal, according to our resistance or shunning of evils. As we forgive our debtors, so are we forgiven.

31. How tender are the words to the exiles: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." And how touching the promise: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and with them the blind, and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." It is highly improbable that the unfit went beyond Ramah after leaving Jerusalem on the way to Babylon, for their captors usually killed them as useless impedimenta. This may partially account for the reference to Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted. The inner meaning, however, covers the significance of the whole situation—the deep

sorrow for the sufferings man brings upon himself, through a stubborn disregard of the spirit of the whole Word- the golden rule. By way of contrast the mercy of the Heavenly Father in caring for the maimed and those with child ought to be most reassuring. He is the friend of the needy, to lead them "out of ignorance of truth into the truths of heaven," And more- "the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall compass a man," that is, to protect him. When man makes everything of his intelligence, he falls. When he rises, he finds his "better half" -his heart, -is his best protection. The dream of the emancipation of the world some day from war is refreshing, if we believe it, and work for it. "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." The captivity yields "a new covenant," the law written in the heart free, ultimately, from sin. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The Lord will call sin to remembrance no more, because we have, through persistent exclusion, opened the way for Him to give us his love in its place.

32. It is interesting to note that Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, wrote his most consoling words when he was in prison. Out of despair springeth hope, which is never illusory when placed in the Lord. Jeremiah's action at this juncture clinches the argument. The siege of Jerusalem had begun, the city was doomed, and yet Jeremiah bought a field to which he held a right of preemption for "seven shekels and ten pieces of silver," in proof of his faith in God's Word. "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land." The land represents heaven, and the captivity in Babylon represents the suffering which accompanies our acknowledgment that we are slaves to self-will. And Jeremiah's purchase of the family property has the same significance as the Lord's last words to his disciples just after He had predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple: "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me; . . . I go to prepare a place for you." To the extent that we have paid the price, and our debts are forgiven, we are heirs to the kingdom. Every protest condemning and controlling thoughts and feelings unworthy of the hallowed Name we bear brings us nearer to the day of our emancipation, and return to our native land.

33. From prison comes the word of the prophet predicting failure for the defenders of Jerusalem, but the return of the captivity both of Israel and Judah with joy throughout the land. The city shall be called in that day "The Lord our Righteousness." The throne of David and the priesthood will return to stay. The old shall perish, and the new shall take its place. These two states of death and life follow each other interminably without time in cycles of ever varying strain and duration. Assimilation and elimination are constants in the growth of the mind, as in the growth of the body. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (I Cor. 13:11.) Spiritual growth follows the same order on a higher plane. Of Jesus it is said that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." In later years, however, growth is marked by losing, hating and destroying the self-life, or self-willed life, and taking on the life eternal. "The Lord rises again daily in the minds of the regenerate, and even every moment." (A. 2405.)

Asceticism a Cure for Vacillation

34. What follows describes the process of change effected in subordinating self-will to God's will. The fall of Jerusalem was imminent. King Zedekiah issued an edict that the Hebrew slaves should be set free. This was carried out, but their owners basely revoked their agreement as soon as the Babylonian army had left Jerusalem temporarily. "The truth that makes us free" is the servant, or means to that end. Sometimes when the truth discloses a conflict within between our wills and God's will, we are deeply

penitent. But thoughts emerge that relieve the tension of the conviction before it has completed its work, and we fall back to the old order again. We placed our confidence in the truth through fear or hatred, and not through love. The covenant with the Lord was broken. Conscience, the medium between the love of the Lord and the life of religion was false, or dead. This is the significance of the owners of Hebrew servants passing between the counterparts of the calf. (See Gen. 15.) The stability of the church and the world is threatened more by would-be defenders working for their own interests and justifying hatred of the least opposition, when they know, and even believe, that hatred is unchristian. They may temper their feelings on occasion in the interest of unity, but give free rein to their grievances again when the pressure is removed. That is ruinous to character.

35. Our attention is directed to the unpretentious Rechabites, who are the secret mainstay and protection of the people in Jerusalem. They lived in tents, were total abstainers, and were loyal to each other in strong contrast to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Prophecy reminds us that the strongest elements in character are in our childlike simplicity, docility, and unaffected constancy. The self-assertive independence of intellectualism tends to divide and destroy the solidarity of the home. Can we see it, and cut it out? (See Mk. 9:43.)

36. The prophecies concerning Israel and Judah are ended. We are now weighed in the balance, the heart in the one scale and the weightless feather, representing impartial judgment, or the truth, in the other scale. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.) So the prophecy is written in a book, read "in the cars of all the people," then to the princes, and finally to the king, who tore it up and burned it, demanding the apprehension of the prophet. But the Lord hid Jeremiah, and ordered him to rewrite the record, with additions. "Great was the anger and the fury that the Lord pronounced against this people." That is the appearance. The reality is the vehemence of our passions when our record is called in question. We cannot brook interference or correction. The king acts for the people. It an outrage to lay the responsibility for the impending wreckage of civilisation at our door! We are fighting for justice in the name of the Lord! The artificial flame of the fire in the dead of winter consumed the record, our own record. We plead not guilty before the bar of conscience; but, the evidence is against us.

37. We cannot see straight until our feelings are right. Our judgment is biased when controlled by self-will. Self-will musters all the facts which seem to justify our opposition to change, and exonerate conscience. The Egyptians came to the rescue of king Zedekiah, and the Babylonians raised the siege for fear of Pharaoh's army. But Jeremiah declared that Pharaoh would return to Egypt, and the Chaldeans would come again, and burn the city. Nothing can justify hatred, or the infraction of any of the commandments in the pursuit of selfish or worldly interests. Any attempt to justify evil when we know that the heart is not right is profanation, which seriously impairs religion, and silences conscience effectually for the time being. On petition that lie might die in prison, the king allowed Jeremiah to live in the court of the prison.

38. The princes, however, sought to put him to death, and, with the king's consent, lowered him into a dungeon where he was without water, and sunk in the mire. From that slow death lie was saved by an Ethiopian eunuch. Conscience -the word of the Lord-is all but destroyed in our determination to counteract all opposition to having our own way. Yet, something within foreign to our self-interest tells us that we are running contrary to the spirit of Christianity. We may be old fashioned in our ideas-like the old clouts and rotten rags in Ebed-melech's hands -but we feel that we must forgive, we must submit, we must somehow get together and end war. "Guns will not solve this sick world's problems." The king hears that if only lie will surrender, the city will be saved; and if not, he will be taken into captivity, and the city

burned. He decrees that Jeremiah should say nothing more about the matter, and live. And so conscience survives. We know for certain that we must love our enemies, must feel friendly to and cooperate with the person whom we never wish to see, or meet, again. But how that is possible, we do not know. We have that to learn through duress.

39. Our first reaction to a really serious issue in which we have become involved, and on which we require to take sides, is to refuse to admit that our judgment may be at fault. There is only one side to the question, and that is my side, the side that is to my best interests. If it's war, it's my country, right or wrong. But when an issue,—a biased judgment,—is forced upon us, against our weaker, but better judgment, we try to escape from it. Our "honor" is challenged, and we back down. Nebuchadnezzar captured Zedekiah, fleeing for his life, put out his eyes, bound him with chains, and slew his sons. Any attempt to have our own way and evade the consequences, blinds us to our offence, tightens our subjection to self-will, and destroys our belief in the teachings of religion. Conscience is not dead, but inoperative for the time being through enforced submission to the inevitable. Jeremiah is placed under the care of Gedaliah. The gentile spirit is also preserved in latency against better days. Ebed-melech's life should be "a prey unto him," to snatch it from the enemy, because he put his trust in the Lord.

40. Jeremiah's counsel to the besieged in Jerusalem was to surrender unconditionally. His counsel to those left in the land was the same. That is the Lord's counsel to us when meeting the inevitable consequences of self-will. Don't rebel when sick in bed on your back. The Lord surrendered Himself to the powers of the world without a murmur. His kingdom was not of this world, otherwise his servants would have fought "that He should not be delivered to the Jews." Zedekiah fought to save Jerusalem. Jeremiah was manacled in prison at the time. The word of the Lord is powerless where men meet intolerance with intolerance, or hatred with hatred, or, in general, resent the permissions of Providence to bend their wills to the Divine will for their salvation. Nebuzar-Adan released Jeremiah. Dictators will make use of the Church as long as she serves their own ends. Jeremiah remained with the remnant left in the land. The Lord is present with his children in their most stubborn moods. And even when they lapse into the recollection of their trials in the interest of self-pity and self—justification the Lord is there to protect them from themselves as far as possible. Jeremiah was taken to Egypt with the last surviving trace of the remnant left in Judea, which perished there, because it rebelled against the rule of Babylon. Is it possible to have a war free from the spirit of retaliation? Is it possible to have quarrels that cripple and disrupt the Church without resentment and recriminations on both sides? Is it possible to accept calamity, or suffering, without complaint, and learn in part what it means to submit one's will to God's will? Neither the suffering, nor the complaint, is God's will. But, while the suffering may not be relieved or removed at once by anything we can do, the complaint is wholly within our power to control, if not immediately, at least in the long, or the short, run. It is always ours to do the most possible in the worst possible circumstances, in the best possible spirit, as did our Savior on the cross, turning defeat into a crowning victory.

41. We are wrestling with the love of dominion to determine when it springs from the love of self, and when from the love of use. The desolation of the land is illuminating. Ishmael killed Gedaliah and his retainers, and seventy mourners from Samaria on their way to the house of the Lord, and then went over to the Ammonites to escape the sword of Johanan. Ishmael represents the same as his namesake, the son of Abraham, a wild-ass man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him. From the love of ruling the disposition to complain against everything and everybody without pity, and especially in adversity, leads to the denial of any authority above self, and to the profanation of the truth. This is involved in the fate of Gedaliah and Ishmael.

42. As to the fate of Johanan and the remnant in Judah, they were fearful of vengeance from Nebuchadnezzar for the assassination of Gedaliah. They therefore asked Jeremiah to learn the will of God, and pledged themselves to fulfil it. Word came that if they abode in the land, the Lord would save them from the enemy; but, if they went down into Egypt they would perish there by the sword, and famine, and pestilence. They would also have broken their word. Johanan, their leader, bears the same name as John, meaning the Lord is merciful. This group have hearts, which make them hypersensitive to injuries, or hardships, or disappointed hopes. They also have an exaggerated idea of their own importance. All might have gone well with them, if they had settled down to take in their situation, -in thralldom to selfish conceits, -and repressed every inclination to resent discipline. This they were unable to do. From childhood their reverses taught them no other lesson than that of following the line of least resistance. They profess a reverence for the Word of the Lord, but it means nothing to them for guidance, for uplift, or for their salvation from themselves. They live over and over again the memory of past grievances, sadly exaggerated and misinterpreted. They live on the lowest plane of life—Egypt—victims of a temperament that kills conscience, starves the soul, and poisons the atmosphere with petty vexations— "the sword, famine, and pestilence."

43. We either live to learn and practice the truth that makes us free, or to reject it, and then place the blame for all our troubles upon the written Word. Baruch, Jeremiah's amanuensis, represents that written Word. "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me," the Lord said to the self-righteous Jew of his day. The written Word does say that all would be well with the Jews of Jeremiah's day if they would surrender, and go into captivity in Babylon. That means for us today that we acknowledge that we are governed by self- will and are prepared to undergo the suffering incident to the submission of our wills to God's will. The rejection of this law, which is written in bold-faced type in the Gospel, to escape the rigor of a guilty conscience, plunges us into torment from which there is no escape. Jeremiah prophesied in Egypt to the refugees that Nebuchadnezzar would set his throne there. "And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are 'for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword,'" etc. Every day, and every hour of the day, we have to make our choice whom we shall serve-God or self.

44. This day Jerusalem and the cities of Judah "are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein." This day the Church is a dead institution in a war-ridden world. We are reaping the aftermath of the wilful misdoings of countless generations in the past, and have yet to learn the simple truth that the keeping of the law is life, and the breaking of it is death. We believe it, but we are like the Jews in Egypt unconscious of the fatal choice they made, when we apply the law to others, but exempt ourselves, or, place heavy burdens upon the shoulders of others, but refuse to move a finger to help bear them. How can we be blind to the facts that we then make out a false alibi for every offence we ourselves commit. This assuredly leads finally to the rejection of the Lord. "My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah." Thank God, there is always a possibility that we discover our mistake, and repent. The gates of the Holy City are never shut.

45. The picture, however, is decidedly depressing when taken to heart. When Baruch had written it down, he cried out, "woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow: I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest." We see the dark side of life, what needs to be broken down and plucked up. The outlook is hopeless. But the Word of life is imperishable. "Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest." The Word is with us at all times to preserve against all perils, when we make a serious effort to live according to it.

Crosses to Bear While Subject to the Love of Dominion

46. Following this are the prophecies against the nations, which enable us to analyse the outstanding evils in the race. First, the Egyptian army has been defeated at Carchemish and the men have fallen by the Euphrates river. The proud waters of the Nile cover the earth, but a judgment follows; the daughter of Egypt is incurable, Nebuchadnezzar will subjugate the land, but Jacob may feel comforted after his chastisement. This indicates in general that whatever we learn about life may be seriously abused by false reasoning. We are very familiar with the abuse of science in time of war. The greater the knowledge, the more dangerous the enemy. But the abuse of knowledge in doing wrong and justifying wrong, the greater the pride in it, and the more difficult to cure the habit. Consider vicious propagandism in war time, or in politics, or in advertising. The universal abuse of knowledge is done to vindicate the policy of contestants in the interminable conflict for power or possessions. That is Babylon in Egypt, almost beyond discipline.

47. The word against Philistia. "Waters rise up out of the north" to flood the land. This is figurative of the rushing of the horses and chariots of the Chaldeans bringing terror and devastation into Philistia. Faith alone, belief without works, is a common weakness in every religion. And why? To please self in the expectation of getting something for nothing. This is Chaldea, or Babylonia. The punishment of Egypt and Philistia by Chaldea represents the punishment brought upon ourselves by self-will in the abuse of knowledge and faith.

48. The word against Moab for "trusting in his works and treasures," for "being at ease from his youth," for "magnifying himself against the Lord," for being proud, arrogant and "haughty of heart." The judgment, the consequences of wrongdoing, is very grievous. The evil in question is the "adulteration of the goods of the Word and the church," which Moab represents. Children mixing with "bad company" pick up bad habits, which adulterate the good in them. Grown up children are more or less liable to be influenced by the selfish ways of their friends. We ought to be above it, but hate to be different, or lose a friend, and prestige too. Prestige! That is Babylon in the background. "Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab." (See Deut. 28:49, also Jer. 49:22 and Hab. 1:8). It is comforting to note that the trouble is not hopeless. "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord. Thus far is the judgment of Moab."

49. The word against the Ammonites. The adulteration of good is followed by "the falsification of the truths of the Word and of the church." We find our own reasons for taking sides With our friends, and for turning down our enemies-the people we like and dislike, largely on account of the balance of power for our own interests. Sometimes our enemies are our best friends, but we are so set in selfish ways that we cannot see it. Fear holds us apart. Yet "afterward I will bring again the captivity of Ammon, saith the Lord."

Against Edom, a close neighbor to Moab and Ammon, which represents "those who falsify the external of the Word," that is, the sense of the letter, which confirms the doctrine of charity. Reference is made to the former reputation of Edom for wisdom and prudence. But the strength of their secret fastnesses in their precipice-protected town Selah, or Petra, deceived them. "Though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, and Edom shall be a desolation." Self-exultation is a common factor in setting aside the obvious meaning of the ten commandments. And the stubborn heart -Babylon -back of all. (v. 22).

Against Damascus, and Kedar, or Arabia, and Elam. These are all farther away from Jerusalem, the center of the church, and represent certain more or less obscure elements in character that are damaged by the determination to have everything go our own way -that is, subject to Babylon. These elements might be related to external interests, as national, and international affairs. "But it shall come to pass in the latter days that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord."

Against Babylon

50. Biblical critics are of the opinion that chapter 50:1 to 51 :58 was not written by Jeremiah, mainly for two reasons: the prophet here calls for vengeance on Babylon, and counsels the exiles to escape from the doomed city, contrary to the tenor of all the preceding chapters. The hand of Providence, however, in recording this changed point of view, whether by Jeremiah or a redactor, is plain. The advice to surrender to Babylon, "my servant," clearly points out what the Lord requires of us in submitting to discipline. We must take up our cross, and not try to evade responsibility, like a coward, or a renegade. No man can be reformed under compulsion. But, vengeance on Babylon to release the captives is the only picture possible to express the attitude of the soul under voluntary discipline. We lament the sufferings that fall to our lot, and cry in desperation for deliverance. Deliverance implies that we have learned in part a lesson, and desire to live up to it. For we think from God and from heaven only as we remove evil, or, as we open the way for the Lord to remove it. To the angels "doing the commandments is loving the Lord. To them the Lord's commandments are the truths in which they receive Him.—There is conjunction of the Lord with them, and of them with the Lord; for they are in the Lord, because they are in good; and the Lord is in them, because they are in truths." (E. 995.)

Finally, the word against Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans. The greatest trouble in the world, and cause of all trouble is the desire of everyone to set every other person right, and keep him right, while each demands a right of way for himself. We make gods of ourselves. We trust in ourselves, regardless of any protest to the contrary. Wherever this spirit is aggressive, it ranges the one half of the world against the other half. The love of self is the antithesis of mutual love. It thinks of self first all the time, and of others as second, or last, or of no account whatever. It seeks its own by force or by stealth, and is dangerous or ugly when opposed. It is hard to accept the indictment against ourselves. "Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him: and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: . . . recompense her (that is, Babylon), according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel. . . . Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. . . . At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations."

51. The judgment continues. "Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad." Drunk from a sense of power: insane from the idea that we have life in ourselves, and can do as we please. We acknowledge responsibility to no one! There is no God, who rules all things and all men! Many thoughts crowd into the mind daily in support of this monstrous delusion and heresy. And when these deranged thoughts spring from a heart

oppressed by trial it is hard indeed to detect their true character, and then flee from them, as we would from a house on fire. "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire. . . . Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her." These prophecies are for "those, who in the church have been taken captive by such as trust in their own falsities, and have become 'Babylon,'" for their salvation.

52. The two preceding chapters deal with the end of the captivity. The present chapter brings our thoughts back to the beginning of it. The description follows closely 2 Ki. 24 and 25, and Jer. 39. In addition the number of the captives is given—"all persons were four thousand and six hundred," multiples of forty and six. The significance of these two numbers throughout the 'Scriptures in relation to temptations and trial is familiar. So the last thought of the prophecy looks to suffering endured while overcoming the spirit of dominating our own lives, and the lives of other people too. But coupled with this must be considered the kind treatment accorded to Jehoiachin, king of Judah. The law of love to the Lord is enthroned in the heart successively as the idol of the heart-self first-is placed where it rightfully belongs -self last. That comes with the release from captivity. But, what terrible sufferings must be endured before we have reached the goal! The Lamentations of Jeremiah give utterance to them. Tears are a wonderful relief in sorrow -a veritable safety valve as against a nervous breakdown.

Lamentations

Comfort in Tribulation

Rabbi ben Ezra invites the aged to grow old along with him, "the best is yet to be." And we love to think that "to grow old in heaven is to grow young." But the later years of life are more full of sorrow than our earlier years. In youth troubles are superficial and short-lived. In old age they are deep and long. "If by reason of strength they be fourscore years (twice forty, that significant number), yet is their strength labor and sorrow."

We are now gaining a nearer view of the Lord's life on earth in fulfilling "the law and the prophets." Since childhood we have heard, read, sung, and talked about it, but the Lord Himself was far removed from us, more like a memory, than as a personal friend constantly awaiting entrance into our home, to establish a closer relationship with our inner life than anyone else. When we open the door, and He enters in, we feel that we can unburden our souls without any fear of being misunderstood. Then our ears are open to his Word, and the old story comes with a new measure of His love. That encourages us, at times at least, to "greet the unseen with a cheer." But, love is an eye-opener. We see life, our own in particular, in a stronger light, a light that passes through the surface to the depths beneath, and lays bare the cause of all our troubles, a froward heart, that resents correction or change. The more the love of God in Jesus Christ enters our hearts the more accentuated is the protest of self-will. This antagonism within continually disturbs our peace of mind, and takes away our happiness in life. Immediately we cease work or pleasure, our troubles return. Self-will and God's will are at variance, and we seem to be helpless to alter it. We are as captives in Babylon. We know it from the Word, and cry out for relief. It is here that the Lamentations of Jeremiah teach us how to bear our cross patiently, and help us to understand the Man of sorrows, who "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." Every word in this book is reminiscent of his sufferings in giving up his will to do the will of the Father, and redeem, and save his children—those who take up their cross, and follow in his steps.

Chapter 1. Lamentation over the disintegration of the Church. "How doth the city sit solitary, she that was full of people! She is become a widow, she that was great among the nations! and princess among the provinces, she is become tributary! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Forlorn Zion! The spirit of the dirge takes hold of us if we suffer on account of the lifelessness of the church, and the lifelessness of religion in ourselves. We love the teachings of the church, and the services in it, but they make little or no difference in our ways of living. It cannot be said of us as of the primitive Christian Church, "Behold these Christians, how they love one another!" When we sing "We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity," we can mean it only in aspiration, for it does not exist in reality. The failure of Christianity today has greater significance for us when we bemoan our own shortcomings, and realize how hard it is to be a Christian. We need not blame the organization: it is our organization, to make it more nearly as we pray from day to day.

2. Lamentation on account of God's anger with his people. "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! . . . He hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation." He hath destroyed the tabernacle and the temple. He hath given them over to

the enemy. The law is no more. The prophets have no vision. "They have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity. . . . All that pass by clap their hands at thee. . . . In the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed." Think of the children brought tip in the nurture and admonition of the Lord in their later years dropping into the heedless ways of the world, none the better for their early training! The wrath of God is simply the love of God converted into the wrath of man, as the noxious plant turns the sunshine and the rain from above into poison that is destructive of life. We hold the Lord responsible for all the sorrows of the world so long as we complain and refuse to assume any responsibility. A verbal concession that God's wrath is only apparent, and not real, means nothing, until we have felt the weight of the cross in surrendering our wills to do his will.

3. Lamentation, but not without hope. "I am the man that have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. . . . Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. . . . It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. . . . Out of the mouth of the most high proceedeth not evil and good. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the 'Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned." Our plea for deliverance from our persecutors is deep and sincere.

4. Lamentation by contrasting the past and the present. "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! . . . The punishment of the iniquity of the daughters of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." Who would have believed that the enemy would ever enter the gates of Jerusalem and destroy it? The world seemed to be a better world in our childhood than the world today. The good old times are gone. And the church that was so united in the beginning is rent by controversy and dissension. Even war today is more terrible than it was yesterday. The more light the more serious are the consequences of its abuse. Our hearts will never fully turn in penance to the Lord until we feel the sorrows of the world as our own, and lose ourselves in the effort to change all for the better.

5. Lamentation in prayer for deliverance. "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless. . . . Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. . . . Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us." These closing words of the Book sound hopeless. They ring true, however, when taken in their context between the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The deep humiliation is a preparation for the reception of the words of the prophet to the captives in Babylon, closing with the thrilling vision of the restoration of the temple, the city, and the land.

Ezekiel

A Vision Born of the Captivity

The situation. The ten tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by the Assyrians. Many years later Nebuchadnezzar took the flower of the nobility, the best craftsmen, Jehoiachin the king and Ezekiel the priest, into captivity in Babylonia.

Its meaning. We have made progress in life. We have acknowledged a few defects in our habits of living, and have changed or modified them for the better. We have recognized certain evils in our thoughts and feelings, and have repudiated them, and made a sustained effort to get rid of them. That effort has not been in vain. That spirit of the Lord has found a place in our lives, and has led us, after a most trying humiliation, to the impasse presented to us in the picture. We are now facing evil within which we have justified so long and so completely that nothing can be said or done that will convince us of sin. We are positive that we are right: we know it: and no one dare question it. The spirit of the Lord, however, has gained an entrance into our hearts, and dares to open the subject even in our extremity, in answer to prayer accordant with the closing words of Lamentations. Ezekiel was ordained to go with the exiles, and instruct them how to meet the situation. And the spirit of his prophecy touches the tender spot within for our enlightenment and salvation.

The Plan: A Heaven from the Human Race

Chapter 1. The Lord has a plan for our lives. To "see all, nor be afraid," strengthens our effort to submit our will to the Divine will for the good of all. The name Ezekiel has the double meaning, "God will strengthen" and "God will prevail." And the vision discloses the plan which is further developed throughout the prophecy. Immediately we have settled down to tackle in ourselves the cause of all trouble in the world-rank individualism-the word of God finds a new and more highly prized place in our lives. We see the meaning of the Word, the spirit of its message, so obscurely understood in relation to, our earlier experiences in Christian living. That is the equivalent of "the spirit of the storm out of the north," a great glowing cloud, out of the midst of which came four living creatures like a man, with great wheels at their sides, which moved forward and upward. Above these was a firmament, and above that a throne with the appearance of a man upon it. And so the feeble effort to follow the gleam in earlier life opens the Scriptures, and reveals the will of the Lord in the light of heaven. We are somehow conscious that heaven is close by, and that we have nothing to fear. The cherubim—the living creatures—are our guardian angels. But the plan of life unfolds as we are to apply the teaching of the Scripture to our inner lives from day to day. The wheels touched the earth, and they moved as directed by the cherubim. The Word as applied to our lives is dynamic. There is power in the doctrine of life drawn from it. There were hands beneath the wings of the cherubim. Above and within all are the heavens, (the firmament), and the Lord who directs the plan, (the throne and Him who sitteth thereon). The plan is "to create or form a new understanding in which is a new will, which is the very heaven of the spiritual man, wherein the Lord dwells with man." (A. 9596.) "Those who suffer themselves to be regenerated are continually carried upwards, thus always into

more and more interior societies. The extension of the sphere into those societies is given to those who are being regenerated especially by temptations." (A. 6611.) It is a marvellous vision. It is prostrating. "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."

Man Lives by God's Word to Him

2. "And he said unto me, Son of Man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee." "The Lord is called 'the Son of man,' where the subject treated of is his passion, judgment, or Advent, and, in general, redemption, reformation and regeneration." (D. L. 21.) This prophecy, therefore, is not meant to tell us how wicked the Jews were just before and after the fall of Jerusalem. The Jews were doubtless just as ignorant of the enormity of their offences then as we are now. The prophet defines the content of the evil that destroys religion as God saw it, and as the Lord as the Son of man saw it. It is there in the Divine Word as God gave it through the prophet for our enlightenment, and judgment. It is also for the most part concealed in the language of parable and in the symbolic actions of the prophet that we may see no more at a time than we are capable of bearing. As the Word opens to us and we see the frightful content of simple infractions of the law, and shun the evil with God's help, we lighten the burden for future generations. As we forgive, so are we forgiven. "Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee. Hear the message prepared to put it into execution." "Eat that which I give thee." Take the words to heart, and live as God gives you to see what life ought to be. "And when I looked, behold a hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was spread therein; and he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

3. The prophet ate the roll, and it was in his mouth as honey for sweetness. No words can be sweeter than the Scriptures with their promise of salvation and life eternal. Sweet to the taste! But that is not enough. "Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee." We are intended to take the words, whether they agree with us or not. "Speak to them of the captivity, Thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. So I went in bitterness, in the hot anger of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me," to assume my responsibility as "a watchman unto the house of Israel." And so we may not flinch when conscience convicts us of sin. We have not discharged our responsibility to God by reading and understanding the Word, but by taking it home to ourselves, meeting the rebellious spirit in the heart with mute and unyielding resistance, until the Lord effects a change in our spirit, and opens our lips to speak the word in sincerity in his name. "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads." Match a stubborn rejection of the truth by an equally determined repulse of the invader, and the battle is won, though the war is not ended. Unflagging zeal is necessary to win, for the children of Israel "are a rebellious house."

The Life of Religion Imperilled

4. The fall of Jerusalem was imminent, because its defenders lost their virility through evilness. The prophet dramatized the point for the exiles. For us the point finds an illustration in many a church division. The common cause of every religion is to better life for all as God would have it. Frequently, however, fictitious arguments are introduced into a heated discussion over a change of policy, or creed, or ritual in

one or in several of the churches. These fictitious arguments for building the church in the world are represented by the prophet's tile with the picture of Jerusalem under siege upon it. The state of the contestants is described by the prophet lying bound on each of his sides for a specified period. In the shoulder, arm and limb are all man's power for action from affection and from intelligence. That power to resist evil lies prostrate in bands when hatred rules the heart. The sustenance of the prophet meanwhile was cereal and dung, the symbol of good polluted with evil in the misrepresentations and misunderstandings in the bitter charges and countercharges which support the besieged in fighting to a finish, like propaganda for home consumption in war time. The lesson was for those in exile- those who know that they are often controlled by their feelings to evil purposes. The church is doomed, civilisation too, when the cause of religion is forced to give way to personal interests.

5. Another lesson for the exiles follows. We learn from it the effect of obstinacy on our understanding of the Word. The prophet represents the teachings of the Word for our direction. The head is the seat of wisdom. The hair on it and the beard therefore represent the outmost expression of wisdom, the letter of God's Word, which, like the hair, serves as a protection and adornment of the precious content within. To deprive the letter of the Scriptures of any authority over us destroys it, in part through burning lusts under condemnation, in part through perverting the meaning to suit ourselves, and in part through its rejection as meaningless. This is the practical significance of burning a third of the prophet's hair, cutting another third with a sword, and scattering the rest to the wind. This is a natural sequence of living contrary to the teaching of the Word. The Church was instituted to be a light-bearer in the world. Disregard of our responsibility brings shadows into many another home than our own. Our evils destroy truths, and our false thoughts consume our best intentions. The fathers eat the sons, and the sons their fathers. And the fond memories of innocence in childhood that return to us are brusquely set aside as childish. We no longer live: we simply exist to gratify the whims of an unstable temperament, that can never yield lasting satisfaction to anyone. The soul that "labors for the meat that perisheth" loses a taste for "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," and succumbs to the famine.

Dangers Within and Without

6. The word of the Lord came again to the prophet, saying, "Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, prophesy unto them, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord. . . . Behold. . . . I will destroy your high places, and your altars shall be desolate, . . . and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, and on all the tops of the mountains." The prophet would have the exiles remember "how that I have been broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which play the harlot after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." It is all appeal to those of us who have discovered how strong is our propensity for having our own way, to be constantly oil the qui vive to note and quickly dispose of these idols in high places, that are most demoralising; as, self-worship, self-honor, self—exaltation, presumptuousness, arrogance, and many others of that ilk.

7. Next comes the land. "Thus saith the Lord unto the land of Israel; An end: the end is come upon the four corners of the land. . . . Thy morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land He that is in the field shall die with the sword For the land is full of bloody crimes. . . . And the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled." The judgment of the mountains concerns the idols of the heart: the

judgment of the land falls upon the ways of living. "I will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations. . . . All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water." The outward life requires the same close attention as the inward life to set it right. The two go together. New light on the inside gives added light on the lower plane of living—for judgment.

The Thoughts of the Heart

8. The elders of Judah came to Ezekiel as he sat in his house. He was in the spirit, saw the cherubim of his first vision, and was then transported to Jerusalem. He witnessed the idolatries practiced in the precincts of the temple, "the seat of the image of jealousy." Passing through the wall he beheld still greater abominations within, "idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about, . . . women weeping for Tammuz," and sun worshippers. And the Lord said unto him, "Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the land." Self-deception! A preposterous illusion! It is somewhat disconcerting, however, to contemplate our entrance into the spiritual world, well knowing that everything that goes on in the dark in our minds here is in the open there—filthy pleasures, hatreds, cruelties, adulteries, hypocrisies. The veil of the flesh is rent, and it is impossible to hide anything from anyone. The attempt to keep it in the dark sounds the death knell of religion. There can be no mistaking the meaning of sun worship. "At the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, (see Lu. 11:51), were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east." Self-love at the centre of things takes the place of the Lord. Nothing can avert the consequences.

9. The vision continues with the slaughter of the idolaters, or, the separation of evil from good in ourselves, which bears some resemblance to the perpetual processes of assimilation and elimination, or purification of the blood in the body. The separation is effected in the vision by a man clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side, the scribe, who represents the Scriptures. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The last day, any day, is the day when the bad shews up in the light, and calls for a judgment. Few of us, for example, are entirely free from decorating "the chambers of imagery" with pictures of our own greatness, or with sinister plans for gratifying secret lusts. These may seem to be perfectly innocent at first, because they get no further than our thoughts. And who knows about them? It is a well known fact, however, that an unchallenged grudge against anyone, repeated again and again will break loose in time beyond our control. The sooner we discover the evil in "every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts" in the dark, with aversion and sorrow, the better. Good thoughts are then salvable, and the evil mixed up with them must be completely renounced, even to the apparently harmless beginnings of it. "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth the little ones (of the daughter of Babylon) against the stones." (Ps. 137:9.) "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity." And the man "who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me."

10. The vision now returns to the four living creatures and wheels seen in the opening chapter. From that vision the prophet received his inspiration and commission to teach the exiles. The growing understanding of the living Word particularly in application to life needs special guidance in relation to the root of our troubles, the determination to have our own way in preference to God's way. The prophet now knows that the living creatures are cherubim. This stresses the question of the Divine Providence in the

abuse of freedom. The Scribe—the man with the inkhorn—is instructed from the throne to fill his hands with coals of fire from under the cherub, and scatter them over the city. The Scriptures in the literal sense declare that the Lord was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem. (See Jer. 34:2.) Here also the letter sustains the same conclusion. The scribe, however, did not in this instance scatter the fire. The chapters that follow shew that the church is destroyed by turning God's love into a burning and consuming fire destructive of all religion. The Living Word throughout makes that clear. That Living Word also operates perpetually on every plane of life, from the highest to the very lowest, to reveal this to man for his salvation, but the Lord provides that no man shall see himself in that light beyond his power of endurance. As is the love of God, so is the light of life, which is distinct from light on, or about, life. "The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of God Almighty when he speaketh." And the body, back, hands, wings and wheels of the cherubim, were full of eyes round about. The Lord is omniscient, and has something to say to everyone through his Word to meet every human need on every plane of life.

Unyielding Perverseness Destroys Religion

11. The Spirit took Ezekiel to the temple at Jerusalem. Before him was a group of leaders who felt secure in the city against the enemy, and had killed all dissenters. They, however,—would perish outside the city, and those in exile, whom they despised, would return to occupy the land, with a new spirit within them. The Spirit then brought the prophet back to Chaldea to rehearse the vision to the exiles. It is enlightening and encouraging to those in the grip of the spirit of being first in everything. "The first shall be last, and the last first." It is hard to give up, hard to give in, hard to submit to the change of a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. There is comfort for those in exile, those breaking in obdurate wills, but it is cold comfort.

The Pervert Finds It Hard to Admit It

12. The exiles heard the message of the prophet. They could see what he was driving at, but were unwilling to admit that it was anything more than an expression of good will. The will to believe, however, is of prime importance in the regenerate life, even "faith as a grain of mustard seed." Therefore, the prophet by a dramatic action before the eyes of the incredulous exiles endeavored to prove that the Word of God, even in the letter, is sure. He bore his stuff from one place to another in daylight, but took it blindfold through a wall by night, that he should not see the earth. We are at odds with someone. We have all the teaching of religion about brotherly love with us, but have no use for it, when most needed. Pig-headed we carry it right through a well constructed argument in defense of our position, and fail to see the unbrotherly feelings in the heart that blind us to the falsities that demoralise our character, and break down civilisation. War is just the excrescence of millions of smaller units flinging scorn, anger and defiance at each other. And every one claims to be in the right! And so the war goes on. The sword, famine and pestilence plague the earth. The church languishes. The promise of the day when men shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks is like an empty dream. Those in exile, however, should take heart. For "thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be deferred any more, but the word which I shall speak shall be performed." The Word of Life is ever living, the only thing that is living. And the peace of heaven is only the accretion of little bits of heaven won through the exercise of the will to peace.

Whitewashing Is Self-Deception

13. "Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" "The Lord flows in, and reveals the mysteries of the Word to those who are led by Him, whether they teach them or not. By prophets who prophesy out of their own heart, and follow their own spirit, are understood all who are not led by the Lord, but by themselves." (1., 624.) We, therefore, possess the ability to recognise in our train of thinking whether it is from self, or from God; whether it rings true or false. We often attempt to confirm what is false in self-defence. That is the equivalent of building walls, and daubing them with untempered mortar, or whitewash. Self-justification of our false judgments of other people, or of living conditions, past, present, or future, cannot stand. The attempt to give what is false the appearance of truth in the interests of peace, or whitewash character, is futile. It is like the house built on the sand, that falls, when wind and storm assail it. We ought to know it, and quit. But then we have to deal with our feelings as well as our thoughts. The prophetesses-women who "hunt the souls of my people, and save souls alive . . . by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies . . . I will deliver my people out of your hand." Strong feelings in man or woman make self-deception more subtle, but not beyond exposure.

Self-Exaltation Degrades Spiritual Living

14. We sometimes compare our own work with that of others to their disadvantage. The comparison may or may not be just. But, beneath there often lurks self-worship—an idol of our hearts. A certain self-satisfaction sweeps through our system, with an uplift that is very pleasing. That is the stumbling block of iniquity before our face. It appears in the open, if our supposed superiority is called in question. It is there then for judgment. The thrill of self-exaltation is at the cost of the spiritual life. It deprives us of "the bread of God that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world (famine), it excites ugly lusts (evil beasts), it creates cutting criticism (the sword), and it finally destroys faith in God (the pestilence). Whatever good may have been gained through trial (Noah, Daniel and job), is unproductive. History testifies that no one seems to learn anything from history. And yet, no evil is permitted without serving some good end. "A remnant shall be carried forth unto you . . . and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in Jerusalem, saith the Lord God."

15. The wood of the vine tree is worthless. It is too weak even to make a peg of it. A half burnt branch is even more worthless. Even so is Jerusalem half charred by the first captivity. The end is near, a devouring fire will desolate the land. "Infernal fire is from no other source than the change of the Divine Love into evil loves, and into direful lusts of injuring, and of doing evil," which destroy the church in man. Who does not know this from experience?

16. A historical allegory! The past in a new light! The three universal loves, the love of heaven, the love of the world and the love of self, "are in every man from creation, and thence by nativity." (T. 395.) These are here represented by Jerusalem, Samaria and Sodom. The church, richly endowed by the Lord, has made an illicit use of knowledge, reason and worldly power (Egypt, Assyria and Chaldea) to her utter humiliation and ruin. She is "the wife that committeth adultery! that taketh strangers instead of her husband!" The corruption of the spiritual life is more degrading than mere sensuality. "Thou (Jerusalem) wast more corrupt than they (Samaria and Sodom) in all thy ways." "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Nevertheless, our lost condition is far from hopeless. "I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom, and the captivity of Samaria, . . . and I will establish unto thee

an everlasting (marital) covenant. Then shalt thou remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thine elder sister Samaria, and thy younger sister Sodom, and I will give them unto thee for daughters. . . . when I have forgiven thee all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." When "the love of heaven is inwardly in the love of the world, and by this in the love of self, man performs uses in each from the God of heaven." (T. 395.) Properly subordinated and purified from the first to the last, they perfect man.

17. The "parable" in this chapter is explained in the letter. The eagle is Babylon; the top of the cedar is Jehoiachin; the vine is Zedekiah; the second eagle is Egypt, to whom Zedekiah turned for help; and the withered vine is the end of the kingdom in Jerusalem. But the "riddle" is to define its meaning for us today, and apply it to life. In the abstract, an exalted view of life shews the logical necessity of practicing the Christian principle of giving up our lives for others in the world's mart to save the world. The church that puts doctrine first and life second, in practice, though not in theory, is doomed. Zedekiah was the last to sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. His eyes were put out by Nebuchadnezzar, and he suffered death in Babylon for attempting to escape from his captor. His name does not appear in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. But this chapter gives the promise of the advent of One who would subordinate his will to the will of the Father in the world as we know it. "Thus saith the Lord God: I will take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain; and it shall be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing." If the church is to survive and grow the thoughts drawn from the life of the Lord throughout the Scriptures must be put to work in "a land of traffic, in a city of merchants" to salvage the unemployed, and to give to every last man the fullest opportunity to do his utmost for the good of his fellow men, in the pursuit of happiness-their happiness.

Each Is Responsible Solely for His Own Sins

18. Our individual responsibility for our sins is inescapable. It has often been felt, however, that "if the fathers are evil, their offspring also are evil." "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Not so, sayeth the prophet. "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live." His righteousness shall not save a wicked son. Neither shall that son's wickedness condemn a repentant child. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It is a momentary state of life, which is made permanent by our own continual choice in complete freedom. The Lord's way is just: "for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live."

19. "A lamentation for the princes of Israel!" The most likely historical references in the parable are to Hamutal and her sons Shallum and Zedekiah—the lioness and her two whelps—and to Zedekiah as the branch that brought destruction to the vine. (See 2 Ki. 23:29-34, and Jer. 22:10-12.) The dirge expresses the sorrow attending the discovery of the power of evil over us, and our apparent inability to cooperate openly and wholeheartedly with those who stand in our way. We make the best of resolutions, but rebellious thoughts get on the rampage again and again, Our pride in the little we know is overbearing! Our convictions, or beliefs, are infallible! And the spirit of non-cooperation with real or supposed dissentients, burns within to the ruination of the church, or religion. The captivity in Babylon begins to have a meaning for us now.

Unhappy Memories

20. The older we grow, the more we turn to our early experiences in life. Retrospect in relation to our experience with God is not altogether gratifying. We do recollect with what fervor we pledged fealty to the Lord. The prospect of deliverance from enslavement to the world, and leading a heavenly life, had a touch of ecstasy in it. But we soon faced facts bearing evidence to a stronger attachment to the world than we had imagined. The commandments then took on a practical meaning for us. Our effort to keep them advanced us on the heavenward path. But then revelation proved to us that our worship of God was mostly of the lips. The heart went after idols common to our generation that were lowering to character. The recollection of experiences which brought this to light was humiliating. A ripening judgment shewed retrogression and progress in close association with each other. Three times the Lord's words occur: "I said, I would pour out my wrath" upon the idolaters, "but I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, among which they were." We see worse, yet do better. "Ye remember your ways, and all your doings, and ye loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for my name's sake."

The last five verses form an introduction to the chapters on the indictment of Jerusalem, (21-24), and the prophecies against the nations (25-32). In the light of past instruction and experience, a fire is kindled in the heart with the successive emergence of hidden evils that demand judgment.

The Condemnation of the Church

21. The campaign opens with a declaration of war, and war to the finish. "All flesh shall know that I, the Lord, have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more." It strikes the heart with terror, because it enters strictly forbidden territory, questioning many false ideas that spring from cherished evils. When the Lord searches our hearts and tries our thoughts in answer to prayer, we do not like it. "Every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the 'Lord.'" Again a sword sharp and furbished, keen and glittering, stabs still deeper forms of self-deception to our consternation. "I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied." Then follows "the sword of the king of Babylon." Two ways of approach present themselves, one to attack the falsifications of the truth in our thinking, -the way "to Rabbah of Ammon," -the other to attack the heart of the evil- "Judah in Jerusalem the fortified." Conscience pricks the root of the trouble-self -worship. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand." "Transgression signifies evil against truth, which is less, and sin evil against good which is more grievous." (A. 6563.) The judgment of Ammon follows later.

22. "And thou, son of man, wilt thou judge the bloody city? then cause her to know all her abominations." Guilty in shedding blood, making idols, "setting light by father and mother," profaning the Sabbath, slandering the neighbor, committing adultery, taking bribes, "and has forgotten me, saith the Lord God." Whoever knows his heart may detect the root of these evils there. To forget God in the heart, though not with the mouth, however, touches the vital spot, self- confidence. Babylon is on the way to the gates of the city. The contents of the mind are likened to dross of silver—the scum, or refuse. And the heart is

compared to "a land that is not cleansed, nor rained, upon in the day of indignation." Prophets, priests, princes and people are corrupt, even to the last man. There was no man to defend the land that it be not destroyed. Therefore, "their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord God." This enables us to account for the torment—"the fire of my wrath"—in the latter years of life due to the maturation of an unchecked self-will that should have been taken in hand years ago.

23. This historical allegory is not pleasant reading. Aholah means "her tent." Aholibah means "my tent in her." The tent was the home of the ancients. Aholah—Samaria—represents God's dwelling place in man's understanding. Aholibah—Jerusalem—represents God's home in the will "my tent in her" (i. e., Aholah), because, as is the will, so is the understanding. God's love in man's understanding keeps him right, but, self-will, in place of God's will, leads the understanding astray. As self-will becomes hardened the mind falls for the worship of knowledge (Egypt), for the justification of selfish ways (Assyria), and finally for atheism, or nihilism (Chaldea). "Evil loves falsity and desires it to be one with itself, and they also unite; just as good loves truth and desires it to be one with itself, and these unite. As then the spiritual origin of marriage is the marriage of good and truth, so the spiritual origin of adultery is the mating of evil and falsity. Hence this mating is signified in the spiritual sense of the Word by adulteries, whoredoms and harlotry." (M. 428.) Reading between the lines now with all this in mind it 'becomes plain how character degenerates and "the home" is broken up until the understanding cannot see when self is wrong, and the will refuses to submit to the Divine will. "Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms."

24. The day on which the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem has arrived. The boiling caldron discloses the meaning of the situation. Israel has always had the power to apply the teaching of the Church regarding the life of charity to their daily life. This is signified by the shoulder and the thigh of the sheep in the pot. Each received of it not according to lot, but according to his need. The violence done to these teachings is all in the open. There is nothing now left in the pot but scum. "Her scum goeth not forth by fire. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have cleansed thee and thou wast not cleansed, thou shalt not be cleansed from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my wrath toward thee to rest." The burning of the empty pot with the scum in it represents the burning of the city. (A. V. "scum:" R. V. "rust." The content or the container? Which? It matters not: both are rotten.) That evening Ezekiel's wife died, without any mourning on her account. She represents Jerusalem, the church, "the desire of his (Ezekiel's) eyes . . . the joy of their (the people's) glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their sons and their daughters." The worst that can befall any man is to lose his God, and his religion, without regret. Nevertheless, the gates of the city are never closed to anyone who surrenders his will to the Lord, and is prepared to undergo the trials incident to the captivity. "In that day he that escapeth shall come to thee (Ezekiel), to cause thee to hear it (his confession) with thine ears. In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him that is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: so shalt thou be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord."

Judgment of the Nations in Another Setting

25. The judgment of the nations follows to prepare the way for the restoration of Israel. (See Chapter 28:24-26.) The children of Ammon and Moab! It is one thing to deplore the impuissance of the Church in the face of war, or many other tragedies in life. It is another to condemn the Church on that account. The spiritual life is man's only hope as an adequate means to world-recovery. Edom shewed a most

unbrotherly spirit at the fall of Jerusalem. It hardly seems credible that he should have contemned his brother especially in a time of calamity, even though Israel was largely to blame for it. The greater the misfortune, the greater the need of sympathy and understanding. "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." (John 12:47.) Philistia is said to "have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy with perpetual enmity." This is the spirit of pride in our knowledge of the spiritual life, taken as a substitute for the practice of it, an ever present enemy against which we need to be on constant guard.

26-28. Tyre and Sidon! Tyre means "a rock." The city was built on an island rock about half a mile from the mainland. It formed a little kingdom by itself. Hiram, its king, furnished valuable materials for the temple in Jerusalem. Tyre therefore fittingly represented that wealth of knowledges necessary for the building of the spiritual life. After the fall of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar approached this "gate of the peoples" to destroy her walls, break down her towers, and make her a bare rock. "Thou shalt be a place for the spreading of nets; thou shalt be built no more." She is likened to a ship "perfect in beauty," equipment, and management, trading in all parts of the world, but falling "into the heart of the sea" with all her mariners, and merchandise, in the day of her ruin. And so, of her prince and king whose hearts were lifted up, because of her riches, it is said, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee: . . . thou art become a terror, and thou shalt nevermore have any being." The judgment of Sidon is bound up in that of Tyre, the two representing exterior and interior knowledge respectively. When the Church is wrecked by the love of rule everything else suffers correspondingly. "The knowledges of good and truth from the Word are signified by a ship, because ships cross the sea, and bring back the necessities which supply the natural man for every use, and these same knowledges are the necessities which supply the spiritual man for its uses, for from them is the doctrine of the Church, and according to this is life. Ships signify these knowledges, because they are containers." (R. 406.) From knowledges are wisdom and intelligence. "But when knowledges are for the sake of self, for the gaining of eminence, and of reputation, or wealth, those who acquire them have no life, and become altogether deprived of them. They are deprived of them in the life of the body by embracing falsities as truths, and evils for goods, arid in the other life, they are wholly deprived of these things." (A. 2967.) It is rather distressing to contemplate the vast increase of knowledge today and the inane abuse of it universally. Yet, again, "a new church will come into existence, when the former has been condemned." "When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the nations, then shall they dwell in their own land which I gave to my servant Jacob." New constructive work in this direction is going on all the time. It comes to light as a new and better order takes the place of the old.

29-32. Egypt. The judgment of Egypt is also the condemnation and rectification of the abuse of knowledge. It is difficult to make the distinction here quite clear, because the English language has only one word for "knowledge," the Greek and Latin languages have two, *eidenai* and *ginoskein*, *scire* and *cognoscere*. (Compare Gr. *phileo* and *agapao*, Eng. to love; and Gr. *hieros* and *naos*, Eng. temple.) In all instances the former word refers to an external, and the latter word to an internal knowledge, love and temple. So, for instance, when we look at anyone we see an outside with the eyes of the body, and an inside with the eyes of the spirit. The general appearance makes a permanent impression on our exterior memory. At the same time every impression that character makes upon us is indelibly recorded in our interior memory. Thus our reaction to everything we learn from day to day makes two impressions upon us which are preserved separately in body and soul. The knowledges stored in the outer memory are represented by Egypt, and the abuse of them in any way is the subject of judgment in the chapters before us. The abuse of science in war, or of culture in hateful criticism, has a content that these chapters help to unfold. Here again, Babylon lurks in the background. Nebuchadnezzar was given the land of Egypt as his

wages for the reduction of the city of Tyre. "By Pharaoh (in c. 291) is signified the same as by Egypt, the natural man, and what pertains to knowledge in him. He is called a great dragon which means knowledge in general. He shall be drawn out of the river, and all the fish shall adhere to his scales means that all 'intelligence would perish, and that the knowledge which is substituted in its place would be in the sensual man without life." (E. 513.) Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt, Pharaoh's arm, or power, was broken. The fall of the great cedar,—"the Assyrian"—shows the loss of reason through the abuse of knowledges, which is succeeded by a lamentation for Pharaoh and for Egypt as a sequel of the judgment. Closer study, however, is needed to tell when the knowledges that have been put to a bad use are exterior or interior, and see the force of these judgments against Egypt and Tyre in the prophets.

Prophecy Now Has a Place in Our Lives

33. This chapter opens the third and last section of Ezekiel's prophecy. Individual responsibility is the key-note. The prophet himself felt it keenly when he accepted his commission (c. 3:17-21). He impressed it upon his incredulous hearers when he predicted the certain fall of Jerusalem. (c. 18:5-29.) And he reasserted it when his mouth was opened again after he that had escaped from Jerusalem, reached the exiles in Babylon, and reported, "The city is smitten." (c. 24:26, 27.) The watchman is faithful to his duty. He blew the trumpet, he warned the exiles that if they did not turn from their evil ways, they should die in their iniquity, and he would be guiltless. As for those left in the waste places of the land after the destruction of their beloved city, they shall die by the sword and the pestilence. There is no hope for anyone so long as he places self at the centre, and God at the circumference, or nowhere. The self-centred exiles were overwhelmed by the judgment that had overtaken the nation for its sins. They realised at long last that the nation would perish unless they changed their attitude toward the Lord's prophet. They, therefore, gave ear to his words, though their hearts still went "after their gain." We are certainly facing in the right direction when we know that we are utterly selfish, and turn to God's Word for light and help. "When this cometh to pass (behold, it cometh), then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."

Evil Shepherds-The Good Shepherd

34. The evil shepherds are "the teachers who regard their own good only, and not the good of the Church." They feed on the best, and neglect the sheep, especially the sick, the brokenhearted, and the lost sheep. They rule with force and rigor; they live to condemn, and not to save. As is their dereliction, so is their punishment. Conversely, the Good Shepherd comes to seek the lost, restore them to the fold, feed them "in fat pastures upon the mountains of Israel, . . . and strengthen that which is sick." As for the flock, there are some in it that spoil with the feet what is left of the pasture for others, and the water after they themselves have had their fill. The food and water that nourish the spirit of charity, or love, in the members of the Church are in the Scriptures. It is very unfortunate that so many by their ways of living make the teaching of the Gospel most -unpalatable for others. It is said that they push the diseased with their horns until they have scattered them abroad. This is the unkindest cut of all from the self-righteous. They have a profound contempt for sinners. David, the shepherd-king, is a representative of the Good Shepherd, who forgave the woman taken in adultery, and healed everyone who came to Him, even the leprous, the outcasts of society. "And ye are my sheep, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."

Only as We Forgive Are We Forgiven

35. Esau never forgave his brother Jacob for robbing him of his birthright. "Thou hast had a perpetual enmity, and hast given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity. . . . Since thou hast not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue thee. . . . Thou hast said, These two nations (Israel and Judah) and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it. . . . As thou didst rejoice over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto you. Thou shalt be desolate, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the Lord." There is no more despicable spirit in man than that of rejoicing over the misfortunes of an enemy to exalt self. That effectually excludes self from the kingdom. We shall not have learned that the Lord is God until we forgive from the heart without limit.

36. And this is no dream! To forgive without reservation! There are many routings offered as short cuts to heaven. "The enemy hath said against the mountains of Israel. . . . The ancient high places are ours in possession." The line of least resistance has special attractions for the timorous and fearful, who seek an escape from everything that is disagreeable, or apparently impossible. There are no heights to which character may rise, however, except through humiliation and trial. And the promise of a successful issue in these trials is made plain here in the prophecy of the return of the tribes to take possession of the mountains in the promised land. "And I will multiply upon them (these mountains) man and beast; and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." There is no escape from the trials that change a heart of stone into a heart of flesh save through a breakdown followed by a reconciliation with a Father, -whose love has long been spurned by a recalcitrant heart. "Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." In the day that we are cleansed from our iniquities through repentance the increasing purpose of the Lord is made plain. "As for the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the Lord."

Revival and Reunion in the Church

37. The dry bones in the valley shall hear the Word of the Lord and live again. "Dry bones denote the intellectual proprium, which is inanimate before it received the life of good from the Lord, but is thereby animated, or made alive. The flesh, which the Lord caused to come upon the bones, is the voluntary proprium, and thus signifies good. Breath is the Lord's life, which when it flows into that good of the man which he seems to himself to will and to do, vivifies that good, and from good truth, and out of the dry bones there is made a man." (A. 3812.) "The Lord's proprium alone is life, and from His proprium He saves man, and vivifies man's proprium, which in itself is dead." (A. 149.) By the breath of the Spirit the bones are reunited, clothed with flesh, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army ready for action. The heart and the head shall no more be at variance, but shall form one kingdom under the rule of the law of love. "My servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them. . . . And the nation shall know that I am the Lord that sanctifieth Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." The two rods become one in the hand of the prophet. The potency in making character homogeneous is in a conscience formed by a new understanding of the Word.

38, 39. While progressing toward that consummation an old weakness comes to the fore in a stronger light than ever-our worship of the Lord is formal. In other words, we are facing the practical significance of the vision of the valley of dry bones. We are more interested in the intellectual aspect of religion than in the life of religion. We have a good deal to say about the life of religion. We believe heartily that that life is to do good. We like practical sermons, and the discussion of the practical problems of the day. But the practical theory is for others to practice, and not for ourselves. Religion means for us, for the most part, dogma, and worship, and possibly some service to the Church and to the social welfare. Our religion does not radically change our nature, or rid us of ancient bad habits. To face the serious charge that we are no better for our religion, rather worse for it perhaps, meets the mandate to the prophet to set his face against Gog, the land of Magog, and Gog's allies, invading the land for spoil and devastation. Gog means "a roof," and Magog "a floor." These are externals of considerable value. But the life in the home within is of paramount value. That life must be bettered. We know it, and are deeply concerned about it. That is well. The Lord protects us from the enemy, to their own destruction.

The New Temple

40-48. Now follows the vision of the Temple, its gates, its courts and porches, its chambers, its furnishings, and its worship. Ordinances and laws are laid down for the Levites and priests; land is allotted to them, and to the prince, and for the Holy City; and various regulations are added for the observance of the festivals and daily offerings. An outstanding feature of the vision is the measurement of everything that is measurable. The significance of it is summed up in the words, "Thou, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them. measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the house, and the egresses, the ordinances, and all the laws thereof, and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them This is the law of the house." The law of character building is plainly a process of measurement, or of testing our lives by the Divine pattern in the Lord's life. The more we find in that life from both Testaments, the more clearly we recognise His greatness and our smallness, His perfection and our imperfection, His all-sufficiency and our nothingness. Line upon line, here a little and there a little, from day to day, character takes form with the indefatigable rejection of the pernicious elements in human nature, and the reception of the good which the Lord implanted in our hearts in childhood, or, the good which we see in Him by reason of the good He gave us in the early impressionable years of our lives. This is the significance of the fact that almost all the measurements of the new temple, the new city and the new land are multiples of five and ten, which numbers are associated in the Scriptures with the measure of heaven each of us receives in infancy, childhood and youth, with its illimitable content for use in futurity. (A. 5291.)

The sanctuary in the midst of "the oblation" represents the internal worship of the Lord as the central source of all life and power. From the eastern door of this temple proceeded a life-giving stream of waters, which signifies "the Divine truth that reforms and regenerates man." (E. 513.) How deep can we "enter understandingly into the mysteries of faith." A thousand cubits brought the waters up to the prophet's ankles; another thousand to his knees; still another thousand to his loins; and yet another thousand beyond his depth, "a river that could not be passed through." For some it is enough that they explore and enter into the sensuous, or natural, states of life that were heaven to them in youth. Others again go deeper into the understanding of "spiritual natural" states of life in childhood. And there be those who reach the understanding of the "spiritual" content of the "remains" stored up in them in infancy. (E. 629.)

Beyond that are depths of God's love to man that no one can fathom. This stream of intelligence and wisdom from the fountain of youth vivifies every thought, and gives nourishment to the spiritual life, with perpetual restoration.

The prophet saw a new division of the land among the twelve tribes. The existence of heaven in the individual, or in the race, at length becomes apparent. There are definite signs that the world is growing better, and not worse. But these signs are not altogether clear at present: there is so much evil mixed up with them. The allocation of the tribes in the land starts with Dan in the north. But the gates are always open for going forth with new light and life to preach, to teach, to heal, to reconstruct society, from inmost to outmost. "And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."

Daniel

A New Perception of Justice

Daniel was taken captive to Babylon before the fall of Jerusalem, and lived there until after the fall of Babylon, and the release of the exiles by Cyrus, King of Persia. His name means "God is my judge." In keeping with it the first six chapters of his prophecy pronounce a judgment—the judgment of conscience—on the love of dominion, which Babylon represents, and the last six on the fatal mistake of substituting faith for the life of religion.

Conscience in a Totalitarian Age

Chapter 1. Anyone who is a slave to the tyranny of his passions is not slow to enlist religion in his cause, if he thinks it will be to his advantage. Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and the sacred vessels in the temple to Babylon. It is then very difficult to see when we are in the wrong. Conscience, however, is not dead. Daniel is specially cared for by the king, at his beck and call. Conscience too is not without support. Daniel had three companions: Hananiah, "The Lord is merciful," Mishael, "Who is what God is?" and Azariah, "The Lord has helped." Our belief in God is not completely dominated by self-interest, which inwardly discredits the power of religion. Babylon called Daniel Belteshazzar, which means "Protect his life." Self-interest regards religion as an opiate to deaden the sufferings of this life by the promise of eternal happiness hereafter. The spirit of Babylon also denies God's mercy, or power, or help. All reference to God is removed from the foreign names given to Daniel's companions—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. A totalitarian state, however, cannot—dare not—go so far as to destroy the church altogether. There are some who cannot swallow the claims of nazism, or communism, which merely represent a universal spirit of the times, making the church subservient to the state. We refuse to be fed up on that diet. The better side of us loves the simple teachings of the Bible, "seeds" from the hand of the Sower, for the sustenance of the soul, which maketh man wise unto salvation.

2. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which went from him on awakening. His wise men were helpless to reproduce it, let alone explain it. Daniel procured a delay of the death penalty, and in answer to prayer by himself and his companions retrieved the dream and interpreted it to the satisfaction of the king. Conscience accepts the truth revealed by the Lord, and confirmed by the Word, that "at first, every church of the Lord has no other doctrine, and loves no other, than that of charity; for this belongs to life. But successively the church turns itself away from this doctrine, until it begins to hold it cheap, and at length to reject it; and then it acknowledges no other doctrine than that which is called the doctrine of faith; and when it separates faith from charity, this doctrine conspires with evil." (A. 2417.) This is the significance of the dream-image seen by Nebuchadnezzar. In the beginning from the love of the Lord men sought with zeal to extend and perfect their lives in accordance with the Word of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar was this head of gold. Then followed the decline in gold, silver, copper and iron ages, ending in the iron and clay in the feet of the image. The rock that shattered the image and filled the earth is the same as the rock on which the Lord's New Church is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream, which was revealed to Daniel. The meaning of revelation for judgment is given only to those who pray for the light of life which is in the Lord Himself.

"Resist Not Evil"

3. Decadent Babylon represents the love of power over men's souls penalizing all who refuse to worship self. Our faith in God's mercy, power and help-Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah-is put to the test. A living faith ought to withstand the hatred of others, false accusations, persecution, ostracism, or excommunication, without resentment. With the Lord's help we are saved from the passions that consume those who place self first. Having passed through this ordeal, our judgment becomes free, and independent of opposition or restraint. Daniel's companions retire from the scene, although they still exist secretly in the background.

4. Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, which the magicians could not interpret. Daniel's interpretation teaches us that the church is an incalculable power for good, when freedom of conscience is held to be inviolable. But, when the church arrogates the power of God to determine what others shall believe and do, its influence is degrading, justifying hateful passions seeking an outlet in punishing and condemning any and every non-conformist, and ending in gross materialism and atheism. An enlightened conscience sees this, particularly when we consider how we should feel if anyone attempted to force his beliefs upon us at the sword's point. Daniel's interpretation was convincing, because he said to Nebuchadnezzar, "My Lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." How searching!

"Judge Not"

5. The judgment of Babylon follows. The abuse of power to enforce one's beliefs and opinions on other people, even by intention, is much more disastrous than the abuse of strong drink. Delirium tremens may end in the death of the body, but hatred and intolerance plunge the soul in hell. Contempt and hatred grow with the accentuation of conflicting interests, bringing sorrow and suffering in their wake. Life in this world suffers an irreparable loss from the destruction of unity through the suicidal effort to compel uniformity in belief and action. "God is my judge," however, when I can read and interpret the handwriting on the wall. Religious hatred is worst of all. We profane God's Word when we claim infallibility, and condemn those who do not see eye to eye with us to eternal punishment.

6. More than a theoretical condemnation of our error is necessary to clear our conscience. The real issue in adjusting our differences is whether we worship God, or self. Daniel's enemies forced the issue whether he would worship the powers that be, or God. His example, as recorded in God's Word, proves that no power on earth, or in hell-the lion's den-can destroy the love of God in the soul. "In all these things," said Paul, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." (Rom. 8:37-39.)

"He That Is Not against Us Is for Us"

7. The predictions in the next six chapters have an apparent fulfilment in certain historical events in the centuries preceding the Lord's Advent. It is impossible, however, to prove the connection of the two with certainty. Fortunately, the prophecy, as it stands, is "profitable for correction, and for instruction in righteousness," which is much more important. Members of the church are generally drawn closely together when they espouse Christianity. In course of time, however, their first love cools down, and their differences in interpreting the law, or the doctrines, estrange them. Later, they quarrel over these differences. And, lastly, they break up the Church altogether. These four successive changes in their attitude toward the Lord are represented by the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the dreadful beast with horns seen by Daniel. The "little horn" which appeared last represents the power for evil in the belief drawn from the Scriptures that man is saved by faith alone, that is, "my belief." Faith without charity separates every man from his neighbor, and men and women only unite in groups, or sects, referred to as "kingdoms" in the text, to enforce their faith on others more effectively. Hence the wars of the creeds, which contemned the love of the Lord, and desolated the Church, and which is the inside of international, racial, social, and industrial warfare today. There are always a few, however, who see the fatal error of the church, and feel the need of "keeping themselves unspotted from the world." Despotic government works out its own ruin, "but the saints of the most High" shall enter into the possession of a kingdom that is everlasting in its service of the Lord.

"Forasmuch as Ye Did Unto One of the Least of These"

8. The text takes up again the same error of enforcing the importance of uniformity in matters of faith to the dethronement of love. The spirit of charity here represented by the ram, and the spirit of faith by the goat, is of a higher order than that represented by the four beasts in the last chapter. It recalls the judgment of the sheep and the goats in the twenty fifth chapter of Matthew. Again, a "notable horn between his (the goat's) eyes" is the symbol of the destructive power of the tendency to over-emphasise the importance of faith. It destroyed the ram, and reached its limit in removing "the daily sacrifice," and treading under foot "the place of his sanctuary." The "continual" sacrifice, the lamb offered every morning and evening, is the symbol of the dedication of our lives to the service of the Lord. They who think they can gain heaven through orthodoxy justify their failure to love others as themselves by the claim that is impossible to keep the law, or to do good of oneself. They are willing to pay the price of war to enforce uniformity in belief, but not the price of peace in preserving unity in the midst of great diversity of faith and doctrine. "It is a sad time." Daniel fainted, and was sick for days, but "afterward rose up, and did the king's business." The cure for imperiousness and disloyalty is to get down in earnest to the real business of living. (Lu. 2:49.)

"Forgive until Seventy Times Seven"

9. Relying upon the prediction of Jeremiah, Daniel expected that the desolation of Jerusalem would end in seventy years. At the close of a moving intercessory prayer for the sins of his people, however, the angel Gabriel explained to him that it would take "seventy sevens," or 490 years, "to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." The city would be rebuilt, war would ensue, and

terminate in "the abomination of desolation." (Matt. 24:15.) Clearly the prophecy covers the humiliation of Jerusalem, or the church, even until the Lord's coming. There is no escape from the long and grim struggle to bring a defiant self-will into consonance with the Divine will. "With God all things are possible." But we must see God's will, and overcome every obstacle. Heaven is near to sustain our efforts. Gabriel—"God is my strength"—represents a society of angels whose ministry it is to keep alive our faith in the coming of the Lord as our Savior in newness of life after trial. (Lu. 1:26.)

"As Many as Touched Him Were Made Whole"

10. Light from the Word of God reveals, wherein we know better than we practice. Daniel "had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three weeks of days." He had a great vision of the Son of man. We see the Lord's life again and again in a new light, and our own in sad contrast, and are prostrated by it. A hand touched the prophet and commanded him to stand upright, and chasten himself before God. Michael—"who is like God"—"came to help him." We are encouraged, with help from above, to live up to our ideal, but frequently pride ourselves in applying the prescription to others, and stop there temporarily. Then conscience awakes, and reproves us. Like Daniel, we confess, "O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength." We lack courage. "Then there came again and touched me like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me." Yet, again, we are persuaded to be true to ourselves.

11. Thus we fall to rise and fight better. The old gives place to the new in a measure. We pass through racial experiences of revival, and languor, or depression. At times we sink so low that the Word is devitalized, and religion, the only power for good in our lives, is called in question.

12. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." "Near the end, a new church will begin, in which the Lord will be worshipped, and the faith of charity will be received." Those in that faith will cast out evil that has infested them throughout their lives, and enter fully into the new life at the end of their trials. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried.

Blessed is he that waiteth," and endureth to the end. "But go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of thy days." "God is my judge." The separation of evil from good proceeds until the judgment is complete, and the truth has made us free.

II. The Minor Prophets

Hosea

The Saving Power of Love

The opening sentences of Isaiah and Hosea clearly indicate the reason for the division of the Major and Minor Prophets. "The vision of Isaiah, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, to take "a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord." Isaiah and Hosea both belong to the same period. They thus represent two sides of advanced states of mind which have come to the surface for judgment. In the first instance we are shocked by the vision of the astounding foolishness of thoughts used to justify perfectly patent violations of the first and great commandment. In the second instance we are prostrated by the consciousness of our consequent unworthiness of the Lord's love. We have so grossly adulterated it. He sought us for His own, but we have consorted with other gods to our utter degradation.

Making Amends for an Adulterous Love

Chapter 1. We have often talked and sung about the surpassing love of God in visiting his children when at their very worst, and taking their vile nature upon Him, for their salvation. But we fail to catch the inwardness of Incarnation, until we see where we stand in relation to it. We have long been accustomed to hide the evil in ourselves from the eyes of man, to curry favor with the fortunate, to keep aloof from the unfortunate, and to make life as comfortable for ourselves as possible. This state of mind alienates us from those who stand in greatest need of our sympathy and understanding, and possible help. It is an adulterous state of mind, requiring a change of heart such as is involved in avenging "the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu," that is, making reparation for the unlawful seizure of Naboth's vineyard. Sorrow, at last, breaks the heart that will not permit us to associate with "sinners" (Jezreel), a heart that is merciless toward them (Lo-ruhamah), a heart that denies them the right to be called God's people (Lo-ammi). Look at the thoughts born of these feelings squarely and honestly, and they will appear in the light. The judgment that restores unity, mercy and equality is not effected through intellectualism, or reasoning, but through love. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jehovah their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

2. Every man is redeemable, "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi, (my people), and to your sisters, Ruhamah," (mercy be upon you). But, our proclivity to evil has not yet been uprooted. Mother Church is not yet wedded to the Lord. She returns to her former lovers, though not without some restrictions. We undergo further temptation; we register protest after protest against evil in the heart, and renew our covenant with the Lord, until the old antagonisms and prejudices cease to have the attraction and claim which they formerly had upon us. "And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

3. They were still an adulterous generation, yet He came to save them out of love for them. And so Hosea bought back his erring wife like a slave, and withheld from her certain marital irregularities, to whet her love for him. This works for good to those who love God. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

Lust Infects Our Principles, Beliefs and Thoughts

4. The love of evil is stronger than we are prepared to admit. "Like people, like priest. . . . Whoredom, and new wine take away the heart." Lust is tantamount to whoredom. Wandering lusts and conceit in self-intelligence are frightfully damaging to character. Irreligion in any form is essential adultery, although it does not appear in this light until recognised as destructive of marital love. "Hell as a whole is called adultery, and heaven as a whole is called a marriage." (M. 520.) They who are in evil are blind to this, but they who are imbued with love to the Lord perceive the greater degradation inherent in the least evil in the thought of the heart.

5. Priest, king and people alike "will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." They seek the Lord, and cannot find Him: for they have dealt treacherously against Him. They persist in mistaking falsity for the truth. The love of corruption and impurity is still a prevailing influence in their lives. They cannot escape a judgment. Their increasing unhappiness and distress on account of the sufferings of others awaken conscience. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early."

Repentance Is Shortlived

6. We listen to the voice of love, which tells us what the Lord requires of us, and cry out, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, and he will revive us." But our constancy is shortlived. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Even so are the rapid fluctuations from evil to good, and good to evil, that go on in the mind when tried and tempted. How well we recognize our inclinations to accept and reject the truth by turns. "The Lord desires loving kindness and not sacrifice (mere external worship); and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." We pass through man, transitions before we are prepared to lose our own life bit by bit, to find a different life in the Lord.

The Lust Is Deep and Intractable

7. "When I would have healed Israel," outside interests interfered, and spoiled the prospect. How often this happens! Old interpretations of Scripture (Ephraim), and worldly ambitions (Samaria), break down our morale. "They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this. Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Instead of being steadfast for the right, like a dove flying aimlessly, we appeal to reason and knowledge in support of our weaknesses. "Yea, gray hairs are

here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The signs of senility and decrepitude are there, and we are oblivious to it. "They have not cried unto me with their heart. . . . Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." As a matter of fact according to the testimony of history (Egypt), war is the world's greatest folly. No one wins; everyone loses: and yet, they fight to gain power that never lasts. What a terrible illusion!

8. The enemy is on the way to desolate the land for their idolatry and disloyalty to God. It is not of the Lord that the throne of Israel was unstable. The people must look for the cause in the worship of the golden calf. "The workman made it; therefore it is not God." It shall be broken in pieces. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." The use or reason and knowledge to win "a place in the sun" brings only sorrow and desolation. "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities (illegitimate vested interests): but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof."

Lewdness Is a Chronic Condition

9. The prophet refers again and again to the lewdness of the people. The heart is at fault. And then it is no time for rejoicing. Evil sometimes prospers, while good is luckless. Our joy in life rings true only so far as we have set our hearts right with God. The falsification of the truth to excuse any lust or passion favors the worship of the world, and not of God. The days of visitation will follow. "Israel shall know it." We are depressed to some purpose when the Word enables us to analyse the cause, and brings relief with the Lord's help. But frequently we need to meet the worst, before we seek the better. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

10. This chapter unveils a very subtle -evil. "Israel is a luxuriant vine: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars. . . . The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on -us Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy In a morning shall the king of Israel be cut off." We find it pays to be cooperative. The more we do for others, the more we look for approbation, and the more sensitive we are to criticism, until we wish for non- existence, when under the apprehension of a lashing, justly or unjustly. We are bereft of sound judgment! Where is our religion?

Ingratitude, Punishment and Mercy Follow

11. We all recognise the Lord's mercy in the joy of learning during childhood, and the call to use our knowledge of right and wrong to good account. The more He required of us, however, the more we turned to idols. He opened our understanding of His Word, taught us to walk, and healed the bruises from hard knocks in a heartless world. "They knew not that I healed them. I drew them with hands of love My people are bent on backsliding from me How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I surrender thee, Israel? . . . Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger. . . . They shall walk after the Lord. . . . And I will place them in their houses,

saith the Lord." With all this kindness, mercy and pity in mind, how can we ever prove false to Him? Yet, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." The heart is right, and will set the house in order in time.

12. Ephraim represents the understanding of the Word which is falsified by "reasonings originating in the delights of the natural man," that is, the flesh. All through life the Lord strives to reach man through His Word, and lead him into a noble and free life. "Therefore turn thou unto thy God," pleads the prophet, "keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually." History, however, is not very encouraging. In the past, as we well know, the Church of God has prided herself in the possession of the Bible and imposing rituals in worship. She was under the guardianship of the Lord. Nevertheless, the people falsified and adulterated the Word, and substituted ritualism for life worship. Is it any better with us today?

Harder Trials Are Just Growing Pains

13. To all appearances world conditions today are worse than they were last century. In reality, however, that "worse" is here on the surface as an evidence of still greater wrongs within. They are here for judgment. "Now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsman. . . . Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away. . . . Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no savior beside me. . . . O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities. . . . I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. All of this has no meaning for us, unless we see the situation in ourselves, and feel it too. We are not necessarily in a worse condition than formerly; but, whereas we were blind to it before, now our eyes are opened to our low estate.

14. And so we turn to the Lord, confessing that human prudence is insufficient to direct our course through life, (Asshur is untrustworthy), and that idolatry is spiritual suicide. We then open our hearts to be guided by the Lord through a right understanding of his Word. Ephraim has returned to the Lord, who gives the promise: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Ephraim). The curse is in the false interpretation of the Word that justifies wrong feelings. The blessing that follows lies hidden within a pure understanding of the truth, as dew unto Israel, growing like a lily, beauteous as the olive tree, scented as Lebanon. When freed from idolatry Ephraim is like a green fir tree. "From me is thy fruit found." Our thoughts from the Lord are perennially fresh, and eminently fruitful. The name Ephraim means "fruitful." All intelligence and right-living are from the Lord. "Who is wise, and lie shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

Joel

Exposing Sensuality for Judgment

Chapter 1. The outstanding feature of this prophecy is a plague of locusts. The palmerworm, locust, cankerworm and caterpillar are different names for the same insect. From the root meanings of the words they might be translated the shearer, the swarmer, the lapper and the devourer. The locusts go in myriads, they darken the sunlight, they proceed like the rushing of the wind, enter every home, and consume everything in sight. They cut off the meat for man, and beast, and the drunkard too. They also "withhold the meat offering and the drink offering from the house of God." It is a piercing picture of the devastating and demoralizing effect of sensuality. The plague of the heart is the swarm of thoughts that invade the mind of the debauchee, depriving him of all interest in religion, the only interest that can place the pleasures of life where they belong,—last, and not first. (Gen. 6:12.)

2. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion: for the day of the Lord cometh." Conscience is aroused to search the heart whence spring these voracious thoughts for the gratification of selfish pleasures in life. When called in question, how quickly they rush through the mind, assume the appearance of sound reasoning, and destroy every inclination, or intention, to exercise restraint or self-compulsion. The day of judgment must come. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil....Fear not. . . . rejoice in the Lord your God. . .and he will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten,...and ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied....Afterward, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." Every conquest brings visions of greater heights yet to be scaled, greater sorrows to be relieved. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered... in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."

And now for the judgment, a process independent of time, yet always in time when called for. The time here is when we are in a deep depression—the valley of Jehoshaphat,—"Jehovah judges,"—the valley of decision. We sometimes know better, yet do worse; we "scatter the goods and truths of the Church," bartering them for inferior values. It should not be so. We pride ourselves in knowledge without making any practical use of them, and shun the teaching of the church that upbraids us. Conscience raises fierce issues within. "Multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near." We are greatly in the dark, but, in the midst of great commotion, the Lord makes his presence felt, teaches us the Word, and corrects our false interpretations of it. "Then the Church will be the Lord's, and from the Word."

Amos

Insufferable Social Injustices

Chapter 1. The words of Amos, a Tekoan herdsman, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah and Jeroboam. First comes the denunciation of Israel's neighbors. The prophecy warns against using the teaching of the Word to justify wrongdoing, (Syria). It puts us on guard against overemphasising an interpretation of the Word, which becomes a heresy when we condemn everyone who fails to accept it, (Philistia). We weaken the power of the Word when we champion opinions in philosophy, psychology, or sociology contrary to, the plain teaching of the Scriptures, (Tyre). The Word throughout teaches the law of love, which is nullified through any false interpretation of it, (Edom). And those who live according to such false interpretations, destroy the truth in the Word, (Ammon).

2. Moab also comes under condemnation, representing those who "destroy the good and truth of the Church" by violating the law of charity. Worst of all is Judah's offence, a contempt of the Lord's commandments—"sitting in the seat of the scornful." The prophet specifies the offences of Israel, who "sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek." Forsaking the just for a bribe, regarding the poor as of no account, begrudging even the dust on his head as a sign of mourning, and making the meek resentful, surely that is a serious enough charge against a member of any Church, even in this literal sense. Yet, further, that prophet insists that the churchman claims to have all the truth, but keeps none of it, and cannot stand in the judgment.

3. Israel had been chosen to represent the Lord's church. The function of the church is to define clearly right and wrong in the light of God's Word. The world is governed by law, and not by chance. If you keep bad company, that is your affair. The lion's roar is never meaningless! Where there is no snare, the bird can't be hurt; nor can the trap go off till the bird starts it. Israel has been warned by the prophets. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" The responsibility rests with Israel for devastating the church. "They know not to do right, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces." The gods we serve are powerless to avert the punishment inherent in breaking the law. "In the clay that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will visit the altars of Bethel—the golden calf—and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground."

4. Doubtless this prophecy might be applied to the oppression of the weak by the strong, with its consequent degradation and chastisement for amendment. But the lesson goes deeper. Kine represent the love of one's occupation, and "the masters" the intelligence put into it. There is here a false pride, crushing the spirit of humility, that requires judgment. "Bring, and let us drink." If this self-importance is not recognised, and cast out, it will corrupt our worship, and destroy the effectiveness of the teachings of the church. Yea, it will in time falsify the truth, and end in the profanation of it. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" turn to the Lord, and be freed from it.

5. "Hear ye this word which I take up against you, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up. For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave a hundred, and that which went forth by a hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel." It is a lamentation over the state of the church torn to pieces by dissension, languishing from

the worship of mammon, "leaving off righteousness in the earth." The people "abhor him that speaketh uprightly." Proud, corrupt, they reject the truth about themselves, "because they are in self-intelligence." "The prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. . . . The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." Worship in the Church is a mockery. Things must get worse to drive home the lesson. "Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity, saith the Lord."

6. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria." The spiritual church which was instituted has "turned out worse than the religions of other nations. It possesses all things of the church in abundance; but thinks nothing of the destruction of the church." Again, "we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. For, behold, the Lord will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. . . . for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." Silence is golden. The beam in our own eyes must first be removed to see clearly the mote in the eye of our neighbor.

7. Amos saw locusts eat part of the grass, but the Lord had mercy on Jacob. He saw fire devour part of the deep, but the Lord had mercy on Jacob. Then he saw a plumb line, and the Lord said, "I will not again pass by them any more." There is plenty of tattle and mistaken sympathy in the world that do considerable harm, but are readily pardonable. The lack of uprightness, however, breaks down character. It is contrary to God, and the plain teachings of religion. It is adulterous "Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city,...and thy land shall be divided by line, and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land."

8. The basket of summer fruit here has the same significance—lovely fruit, unexceptionable deeds, but done for effect, for the praise of men, and not for the praise of God; therefore Israel is impatient of the call to worship on the Sabbath day as an interference of business, to gain more for self at the expense of others. "Surely I will never forget any of their works. . . . I will turn your feasts into mourning. . . . and the end thereof as a bitter day. . . . They that swear by the sin of Samaria (worshipping the golden calf) . . . shall fall, and never rise up again." There can be no compromise with self praise at any time.

9. The Lord punishes no man. That is only the appearance as man saw it in the past. But no man can escape the consequences of his own evils in intention, or deed. The Lord is all-powerful, and is ever present in the constant process of sifting our thoughts and intentions, so that "not the least grain shall fall upon the earth," or be lost. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." "The land" is heaven, "a kingdom of uses" without limit either progressively, or in species.

Obadiah

A New Pity

Everything known about that which is right and that which is wrong is a very small part of the content of God's Word, whether the source of that knowledge is recognised, or not. Our pride in applying that knowledge to existing conditions is normal, and natural. But, when the love of self enters into it, we use our intelligence to justify selfish ways of living, and to condemn the weaknesses in others. This is Edom, and operates to pervert the truth-the sense of the letter of the Word-to uphold our ways of thinking. We readily notice the process when we turn our attention to it, and see the need of subduing a false pride in self antagonistic to the truth. Opinionatedness makes us uncharitable to opposing points of view. Beneath is the secret expectation that consequences will prove that we were in the right. Note the sarcasm in "I told you so," or, "I could have told you so!" And so we pervert the Word, and subvert the church in ourselves. With patience this spirit can be cast out of our nature, and our intelligence put to a better use in setting ourselves right with God, and finding new ways and means to lessen the trials and troubles of others. We all learn better how to rectify our mistakes through sympathy and encouragement, than by criticism or any claim to superiority. "Saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

Jonah

"Giving Light to All That Are in the House"

Chapter 1. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it: for their wickedness is come up before me." Asshur built Nineveh. Asshur signifies human reason, and Nineveh the falsities that excuse evil practices. Many of us, however, know no better. Our education was neglected, and we accepted the common standard of the world, judging life largely by appearances, and not by the standard of the spiritually minded. (A. 1188.) The church has a commission to enlighten and to save the Gentile, not by conversion to a doctrine, but to a new life. And so our preachment must be primarily by a light that shines convincingly in good deeds wrought in God, and only secondarily by word of mouth. To live as we know we ought to live, and as we would have others live, however, makes cowards of us. We endeavor to get as far away from the necessity of facing the facts about ourselves as we can. We complacently refuse to accept responsibility, and silence conscience by thinking that we are no worse than the world we live in. Jonah went to sleep at the bottom of the ship. The storm raged without. Jonah was awakened, and was found to be responsible for the storm. He was therefore tossed into the sea against the wishes of the mariners. An awakened conscience gives us no peace of mind, until we have got to the heart of our troubles, determined to set our house in order. This means that we take the truth home to ourselves first, and make an open confession of offences which we have carefully guarded, and excused since we were children. Our troubles are in general associated with countless memories,—the memory of people, and of things said and done, and of our reaction to them. We sink in the depth of these memories possessed by the desire of seeing where we have been to blame for our present unhappiness, for the disposition that caused us to err long ago is still with us in an augmented degree. Three days and three nights in the belly of the fish! That covers a lifelong succession of hopes and fears as we see wrong on our part, shift the blame on others, and resent interference, or correction.

2. It is hard for us to see wherein we are to blame when our feeling runs high, and an old wound is opened and roughly handled. The song of Jonah appeals to us. It has a definite meaning for us. And when we have reached the point again and again that we frankly admit guilt, and are prepared with the Lord's help to forgive that we may be forgiven, we experience a wonderful relief. "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land," to perform his mission, preach the word.

"The Life Is the Light of Men"

3. The Scribes and Pharisees asked the Lord for a sign to attest his authority as a prophet and teacher, and "he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation, seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Matt. 12:39-41.) The life, revealing the presence of God among men, speaks louder than words. So the light shines: and so good deeds enlighten many who have gone astray in ignorance, and lead them back to the way of life, to the glory of the Father in Heaven.

4. But, the repentance of the Ninevites "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." The Lord did wonderful things for his disciples; yet, when they saw "one casting out devils" in the Lord's name, they forbad him, "because he followeth not with us." The Lord rebuked his disciples, contending that "he that is not against us is for us." (Lu. 9:49.) It is a hard lesson to learn, to appreciate the good life wherever we find it, and shut no one out because he is not of our people, our Church, or our mind. Magnanimity demands that our sympathy and help extend to everyone when needed regardless of race or creed. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it to grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle."

Micah

A New Sense of Destiny

Chapter 1. This prophecy opens with an exposure of the corrupt state of the Church in respect to its doctrinal teachings. The chief cause is due to the violation of the law in Deut. 23:18. The hire of harlots is used to sustain the worship of the Lord. The church, dependent upon the wealthy for her support, sometimes condones the unjust methods by which that wealth is earned. The Church in Russia has been blamed for upholding the vicious system of bureaucracy there in the past. It exemplifies an all too common practice that is debasing, and productive of great sorrow and perversion of the truth.

2. "Woe to them that devise mischief, because it is in the power of their hand." The power of knowledge can be as oppressive as the power of wealth, relentlessly enforcing conformity in matters of belief. The will to do so is equivalent to the deed. It cripples the church, distorting its teachings. The destroyer brings destruction upon himself. Enlightenment from the Word, however, shows the way out for all who, turn to it, and walk in it.

3. Again the shadows lengthen. Self love reasserts itself for further judgment. We "hate the good, and love the evil." The Lord cannot hear our cry, because our thoughts are for war, and not for peace. "The sun goes down over the prophets." God's Word is there "full of power by the spirit of the Lord" for judgment, but we "abhor judgment, and pervert all equity." The church suffers, and we labor under the delusion that the Lord is on our side, "none evil can come upon us."

4. Through deeper humiliation we return to the heights. As the Lord trusts us, so must we trust our fellowmen, howsoever great may be our differences with them. The growth of the church, individually and collectively, is retarded by any attempt to force our way upon others. War is as futile in the church as in the world at large. "All people walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." And then the halt, the outcast, and the afflicted, will be led into the church, and increase its power for good. The assimilation of the new forces will occasion pain in adjusting all to the new law, and sacrificing self-will to the Divine will. Constant effort is needed to sustain the solidarity of the church under trial. The Lord "shall gather them as the sheaves to the threshing-floor. Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion: . . . and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."

5. "Falsities will be destroyed among them, however much they may infest. The coming of the Lord, who is the God of the church, will gather" his own "together, and teach those who are in it. He will utterly destroy reasonings from falsities." (Assyria.) He shall preserve his church. The old order must give way to the new.

6. The vision, however, is not realised. Prophecy and the facts of life are at variance. We gratefully believe that we have made progress in controlling our natural instincts, and that the Lord has protected us from ourselves on many occasions, but our faith in His grace is weak and inconstant. We are assiduous in our observance of the rituals of the Church, and in declaring our willingness to give all we have in His service. What more can be expected of us? just that simple requirement which is so often lost sight of

when tested: to do justice, to love mercy, and to humble ourselves to walk with God. Ours should be the invariable good life. But, there is much yet to be overcome, and nothing short of suffering on account of our own waywardness will bring it into the light.

7. Woe is me! The Lord permits our evils to come to the surface. We are unable to enjoy life. We use reason to justify a distrust of everyone who does not live up to our standard. "They hunt every man his brother with a net. . . . The most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." Every man protects his own interests as his first concern. "Trust not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. . . . a man's enemies are the men of his own home." The impossibility of realising our heaven-born aspirations in such a state of mind appears in the light. A judgment follows. "A new church will be established, gathered from every nation. It will be taught and led." Evil will be removed from us, and "the Divine compassion will be there." "Who is a God like unto thee?" That is the meaning of the prophet Micah's name, the profound reaction to the prophecy.

Nahum

No Evil Is Excusable

Chapter 1. "The burden of Nineveh." Another cross! The prophecy of Jonah concerns the salvation through enlightenment and repentance of those who excuse evil practices in ignorance. The prophecy of Nahum concerns the separation and rejection of well recognised excuses of evildoing from the mind. That is a heavy cross: Israel is in captivity. As children we quickly learn how to defend ourselves when we have broken the rules laid down for our behavior. Practice makes perfection. In course of time we become experts in clearing the conscience of many serious faults and follies. Specious reasonings are worked up into a regular system, behind which we entrench ourselves secure from the attacks of the world. That is the walled city Nineveh doomed to be destroyed. It is a day of terror and darkness. "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries. . . . Who can stand before his indignation? . . . He knoweth them that trust in Him. . . . but darkness shall pursue His enemies. . . . The wicked shall no more pass through thee (Nineveh); he is utterly cut off." A welcome prophecy! Every attempt to justify evil within shall be frustrated.

2. "He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face." The separation of honest self-justifications from idle excuses is the Lord's work. "For the Lord bringeth again the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel." The prophet visualises the capture and spoiling of the city, and expresses the belief that its downfall will be complete and permanent. It is often difficult to separate good from bad reasons for ever varying ways of feeling or conduct. Character is not free from blame so long as the defence of any evil remains intact. Nor is it free from suffering.

3. "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery!" The abuse of reason to conceal secret evils needs to be exposed. "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts: . . . and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. . . . And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" Nahum bears the name of a "Comforter," and the comfort in the prophecy rests in its assurance that no peace of mind is possible, so long as any evil for which we are responsible is justified, and held to be untouchable. The evil influence exerted by the powerful empire of Assyria must be destroyed. "There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee," that is, the report of thy downfall, "shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" The sooner we are disillusioned as to our being above criticism or correction, the quicker we shall advance in the light that leads from slavery to freedom.

Habakkuk

A New Trust in God

Chapter 1. This prophecy gives voice to the urgent cry of the human for an answer to the question of permitted wrong. Why should violence and injustice prevail unchecked? "How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear." People of this enlightened age say and do the most outrageous things, and laugh at all authority. They worship might, and not right. The Chaldeans represent this spirit. How can the Lord, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," permit the wicked to devour one more righteous than himself? Must these barbarities continue indefinitely? Surely, "in a world where a just God rules, nations as well as individuals must answer for what they do," and for what they are. This is the inside of the cup.

2. The prophet ascends his watch tower. The answer can only be seen by reason enlightened from above. We may long doubt the Lord's providence in permitted wrongs, but one conclusion appears in the light, the longer we look at the problem from the inside, "his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faithfulness." To trust in self leads downward to sorrow and chaos: whereas trust in God leads upward with the only solution of the problem through suffering. The curses of the nations crushed by the Chaldeans enumerate the sorrows inherent in self-seeking to be borne and overcome by the faithful. Woe to him that despoils his neighbor to the shame and confusion of both. And, woe to the idolater, with no power above self to afford help in time of need. For the faithful "the Lord is in His Holy Temple," to enlighten, to direct, and to save; "let all the earth keep silence before him." The Lord's works are done in silence. "Their voice is not heard."

3. Yet, further, the prophecy announces the advent of the Lord into a world hopelessly beside itself with violence, and contempt of the law, giving no quarter to opposition in any form. The world rejected the Lord, but the Lord overcame the world. "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled, . . . Thou didst move through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger, Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed." That is the final answer to the problem. The preponderance of evil without restraint, other than the restraint of the weak by the strong, is proof positive that man is a free agent, and holds his life in his hands. On the other hand, the Savior demonstrates the existence of the power of God available to overcome all evil through prayer and effort. We are free momentarily to choose good or evil. Holding the Lord's example before us, we may renew our conviction that we have nothing to fear in life. Although everything that we have thought most worthwhile in life should fail us, and although we face desolation in our spiritual life from time to time, "yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. . . . He will make me to walk upon mine high places." The prophet's name means "embrace." "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Zephaniah

A New Horror of Evil

Chapter 1. The stronger our hopes and aspirations, the more trying the depressions through which we have to pass. The fall of Jerusalem is in sight: the Babylonians are on the war path. Judah will be punished for her sins. "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord." It is a day of the Lord's sacrifice, to punish princes, and merchants, and those who are at ease, and wholly indifferent to their responsibilities in life. It is a day of desolation. Dies illa dies irae! A day of wrath! It is all -on the inside. For years we have been conscious that self interest determined our actions unduly to the hurt of others, and have reached the point of despair in our efforts to alter it. That is our punishment, and that the sacrifice we are called upon to make.

2. The Philistines, the Moabites and Ammonites, the Ethiopians and the Assyrians are also involved in this judgment closing in upon Jerusalem. They stand in the way. We place too much emphasis on a mere confession of faith; we spurn real spirituality, the life of religion; we are not even interested in thinking through the meaning of the Scriptures for a better understanding of our greatest needs, and we are prone to find a reason to excuse ourselves. We can make good our faith only in a life of charity, which should be our chief interest. Progress in the good life depends upon a deepening knowledge of the Word, and a continual rejection of every thought in defense of our negligence, or culpability.

3. Lastly, the judgment falls upon the corrupt rulers in Jerusalem. "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice, she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God." Her princes, her judges, her prophets and her priests! They represent those who have high principles—in theory,—those skilled in weighing evidence to good purpose; those who know "the law," and those who possess great possibilities of loving their fellowmen. They have miserably abused their gifts, and must suffer a correspondingly heavy judgment. (Lu. 12:47, 48.) "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one accord." "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies: neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. . . . At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all the people of the earth; when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord."

Haggai

A New Church

Chapter 1. The captivity in Babylon now belongs to the past. The Jews have returned to Jerusalem, and laid the foundations of the temple, but proceeded no further, being checked by Samaritan opposition. For sixteen years the temple has lain in ruins, a constant reminder of their lack of religion. They excused themselves on the ground that the time had not come to build. They built costly houses for themselves, but would not labor for the Lord. Procrastination and neglect are subtle enemies of our household. We assign other reasons for adversity that follows, The blessings of heaven are withheld; the fruits of righteousness are sparse and unsatisfying. We can do nothing about it! Everyone seeks his own good, and leaves the Lord out of account. "Mine house is waste, and ye run every man to his own house." "The remnant of the people" is stirred by the word of the prophet, and the state and the church get busy with the work of reconstruction.

2. Comparisons are sometimes odious, but sometimes quite illuminating. Both outwardly and inwardly the conditions of living today are better and also worse than they were years ago. The word of the prophet is for church and state: it is addressed to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest, and to the residue of the people. It assures them that the glory of the temple they have just begun to build will be greater than that of the former temple, and that the peace of God shall dwell on earth again. Our vaunted civilisation is valueless so long as the nations of the earth are continually fighting for power and possessions. An external, however vast and imposing, is worse than useless, when it is a curse, and not a blessing. The Word of God, with its expanding vision of the meaning of the Lord's life in relation to the times we live in, holds the key to the solution of the problem. The old order must pass away, and a new—order take its place. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel. . . . and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts." Despite all appearances to the contrary, or, shall we rather say, by reason of them, the construction of a real home in which the Lord can again dwell among the children of men is already on the way, and will far exceed the glory of any former age.

Zechariah

A New Manhood

Chapter 1. Haggai persuaded the Jews to start rebuilding the temple. A few months later they had lost patience. Zechariah's task was to renew their courage, until they had completed their work. The fate of their fathers ought to warn them to repent, and to hearken to the word of their prophets. The vision of the horses and the explanation of the angel tells how a simple rational understanding of the Word had been disseminated throughout the world—there is good in every religion—but had failed to convict men of sin. The riders on the horses reported that "the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." The angel on the red horse pled for mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. The angel with Zechariah was displeased with the heathen that are at ease. The need for rebuilding the temple is imperative to save humanity. The vision of the horns represents the powers that dismembered the church. The four carpenters, or builders, will overpower them. The life of religion, the Lord's dwelling place, is achieved in overcoming every difficulty. Power from the Lord is within the effort simply to do right.

The Church Universal-The Living Church

2. "Behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand, to measure Jerusalem," which shall be "as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." But, Zion must be separated from the daughter of Babylon. The good life must be freed from the love of self, or the love of prestige or self-merit. This prescribes a specific for the growth of the church throughout the world beyond even reasonable expectations. No limitation, however, can be placed upon the Lord's Work. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. . . . Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his Holy habitation."

3. Joshua, the high priest, clothed in filthy garments, with Satan at his right hand, stands before the angel of the Lord. Joshua represents the chief function for which the church stands—the love of saving mankind. His garments represent the teachings of the church in speech or action. The filthy garments of the old church—her false teachings and immoral practices in the past—must be removed, and the representative of the new church arrayed in the clean garments of righteousness, with the badge of wisdom, a clean mitre, placed upon his head. Satan, the personification of all that is false and corrupt, is close at hand to infest the new church. "And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. . . . For, behold, I will bring forth my servant THE BRANCH. . . . In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree." To the extent that we get rid of the corruptions of past ages which still cling to us, we assume the role of true missionaries, calling others as neighbors for better co-operation in the world's work and public welfare.

Love's Conquest

4. The vision of a golden candlestick and two olive trees. Trees signify knowledge, or perception, of various kinds that grow within the garden of the mind. The fruit of the olive tree yields an oil that is good for food, for light, and for lubrication. The olive tree on the right of the candlestick represents the growing perception of the love of God; and the tree to the left, a perception of the love of the neighbor. The oil which burns in the lamp is the symbol of the love in good deeds that shines in a dark world. In this light it is apparent that order can never be established on the civil plane (Zerubbabel) by might, nor power, but by the spirit of love. Therefore every obstruction in the way of freedom of conscience must be removed. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Freedom of conscience is fundamental to the growth of religion. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? Whom say ye that I am?" The new order cannot be built without the free acknowledgment of "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This foundation stone is said to have seven eyes in it, "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth." His providence is universal; "He knows everything that is in man." And, wherever men bear witness to the love of God in the love of the neighbor, a kindly light streams forth to enlighten and direct them in reconstructing society.

5. The vision of the flying roll written within and without. The spirit of the Scriptures condemns stealing and swearing falsely by the name of the Lord. If at any time we catch ourselves thinking overmuch of ourselves, and turning our reputation as Christians to account for selfish advantage, we do well to reject such thoughts with hot indignation. Otherwise we should be guilty of profanation, which is signified by the vision of the ephah with the evil woman closed up inside, to be transplanted to Shinar where it belongs.

"Go, and Teach All Nations"

6. From this development in character there proceeds an influence affecting the characters of others more or less unconsciously. The strength of character as regards the doctrine drawn from the Word is represented by the chariots drawn by red, black, white, grisled and bay horses. People who have only an obscure perception of the truth, or are ignorant, readily accept the thinking of a sound churchman. The black horse going north is followed by a white horse. Those who are highly intelligent in like manner look to a reliable leader to help them in understanding the Word. Grisled horses went southward. And everyone is more or less influenced by the sincerity of a true churchman. Bay, or strong, horses "walked to and fro through the earth." The Lord taught with authority, because his life was in His words. "The church will be constituted of those who are without the church." This is especially applicable to those who are in an obscure understanding of life, those in the north. "They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."

"I Will Draw All Men unto Me"

7, 8. Visitors to Jerusalem asked priest and prophet if they should fast in the fifth and seventh months for the burning of the temple and the murder of Gedaliah. Zechariah answered that it was meaningless to do so, because they had not repented of the very evils that brought desolation to the land. Obey the voice of the former prophets, and prosperity will follow. "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek

the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." There is no stronger influence that draws men of all religions into closer bonds of fellowship than a life that reveals the love of God in word and action.

Truth Lives When Bereft of Self-Love

9. "The burden of the Word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach." It is another cross to take up. The new church grows in the knowledge of the Word, but the abuse of it (Tyre, Sidon and the cities of the Philistines) is practically inescapable, because we can never keep up practice with our learning. It is a hard lesson to learn that truth without good is lifeless. "When truth appears to itself to have life from itself, then it has no life, except such life as in itself is not life. But when it is deprived of this, it is then gifted with real life, namely, through good from the Lord, who is life itself." (A. 3607.) It is possible to practice the truth that the Lord gives us to fulfill. Rejoice in that thought. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass." The Lord will reign within our hearts, and fill the teachings from his Word that have a practical bearing on our lives with a new spirit and life. "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maidens."

10. "The Lord will spiritually bless those who seek him." False prophets will arise and mislead the people, but the Lord will provide new leaders to strengthen the good life and a better understanding of the Word for all men. "They are to be gathered together out of every religion, and taught. The Lord will protect them from falsities that are from hell, because they worship Him."

11. In the main, this chapter points out how destructive of the spiritual life is the conceit which we have in our own interpretation of the Scriptures, especially when it is grounded in a good cultural education (the cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan. E. 410). Teachers, leaders, parents and pastors set a bad example when consumed by their pride of learning in laying down the law to others. And they who accept false dogmas in religion or politics on authority, without further investigation, are likened to "the flock of the slaughter." The harm that recoils upon the leader is greater than that incurred by those who worship him. "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." His power to lead is sterilized, because he fails entirely to see the love of God in Jesus Christ. "The Lord was betrayed by the Jews because He taught them." (Verses 12 and 13.)

12. "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel." Here is still another cross in the spiritual life. The doctrines of the Church are assailed. The assailants misunderstand them. A patient defence strengthens our convictions, though the enemy is blind to the truth. The church rests on a sure foundation, and proceeds on her mission to save with sore hearts for suffering humanity, unconscious and unconcerned about "the very present help in trouble" so close at hand to them.

"He Took a Child, and Set Him in the Midst of Them"

13. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Idolatry and false prophecy shall receive short shrift. A more serious test of faith, however, comes to the surface. Probably due to tragic circumstances our belief in Christianity is accompanied by a curse on our childlike trust in Providence as childish and silly. "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Put that to the test of practicing it, and just imagine what it means: the death knell of religion! It cannot be. "I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

14. Words do not end the trial. There is much beneath that may only come to light when we are ready to meet it. Jerusalem falls, an earthquake takes place, and the light fails. After a judgment the city is rebuilt, and the kingdom of the Lord reestablished. After the collapse of religion in a soul torn by rebellious thoughts and feelings that wreck one's faith in God for the time being, there comes a deeper and a broader conception of life through self-surrender to the beneficent laws of heaven. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." It is the end of a great campaign that bans much that is vexatious and discordant from our nature, and makes it impossible for us to draw nearer to the Lord in worship, and rejoice in the use of everything we have learned by hard experience. The world needs religion above everything else, a religion that includes all, and excludes no one.

Malachi

Preparation for the Lord's Coming

Chapter 1. "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi," that is, "My Messenger," or "My Angel." It is the last cross preparatory to the advent of the Lord. Many of our trials do not make a complete change in our lives. For the most part they only modify or clarify our thoughts. The heart must be perfected as well as the head to perfect the life. Although the Lord has done much for us, we do not yet honor or fear Him as a son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. Our sacrifices are not entirely worthy; there is too much of self in them. Those outside the church do Him greater honor. Those within the church profane their worship. It is not pure, as it should be.

2. And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. "The role of priest has its counterpart in every one who feels his responsibility for upholding others in right living. We face a terrible curse when we are tempted to let them down, and "do not lay it to heart." The Lord has a covenant with Levi, whose name means "conjunction." "He is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.... Have we not all one father? hath not God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" We seriously contemplate forsaking others ignominiously to their own fate, to escape life's responsibilities, and at the same time "cover the altar of the Lord with tears. . . . Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Good, sincere and honored members of the church, oblivious to the profanity in their hearts!

3. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? . . . For he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." "The Lord will come into the world, and will teach the Word in its purity. The church doctrine and worship, will then be as they had been among the ancients. The Lord will then execute judgment upon all who have adulterated and destroyed the truths of the church. They have done this from the beginning, and do not desist from it. Therefore this will bring about their ruin. If they had lived according to the statutes, they would have been in the good of the church. They have confirmed themselves in this, that good is of no profit and that evil does no harm, because the good and the wicked are alike prosperous. It is otherwise with those who trust in the Lord: they will be blessed of the Lord when He cometh. Then the difference will be seen."

4. And then the good and the evil within will be altogether separated. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. . . . And the wicked shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Remember the law of Moses. Elijah shall precede the day of the Lord's coming to heal the breach in the home, and avert the curse that hangs over us, until the last attachment to evil in the heart has been severed forever, either here, or there.

Volume IV:

"Psalms, Gospels and Revelation"

Psalms

Songs of Life

The Psalter contains five books, each of which closes with a doxology. These songs are not didactic, nor an appeal to reason, like the rest of the Scriptures. "Singing exalts, and causes the affection to break forth from the heart into sound, and to present itself intensely in its life." (R. 279.) The songs are inspirational. Of course, the better we grasp the purport of the words, and enter into the spirit of them, the greater the inspiration.

The Psalms are suited to all ages. Children should be encouraged to memorize many of them, even though they do not understand them. Songs are more easily committed to memory than history, and unconscious impressions are made on character through the repetition of holy writ that are deeper than words, and more far reaching than ordinary literature. In his *Praeterita* John Ruskin tells how his mother taught him to memorize large portions of the Bible in his childhood. He did not enjoy repeating the 119th Psalm, because it was so long, and meant so little to him. But, he expressed gratitude in later years that he had memorized it, because he then regarded it as one of the most precious parts of God's Word. After all, life is just the unfolding of the meaning of our earliest impressions. "In the beginning was the word: . . . and all things were made by it." (John 1:1, 2.) "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." (Lu. 24:44.) David, "the beloved," represents the Lord, "the beloved Son of God." These are therefore the Lord's songs.

Book One

The Psalm of Life

Psalm 1. "Happy is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." We are more often in the company of evil spirits than we realize and endorse their policy, as the only one to pursue. It is worse when we follow it deliberately, and worst of all when we condemn correction. We ought to consider others in all we do in prosperity or adversity-by day or night. With the practice of this habit our knowledge of God's life in man grows, and is productive of better thoughts and deeds. Unless the bad is separated from the good, life yields no lasting joy. The song strengthens that conviction every time we repeat it, or sing it.

"Rulers Take Counsel against the LORD'S Anointed"

Psalm 2. The transition from elation to depression is often startling. The onslaught of evil spirits may threaten to break the bonds of conscience, and violate principles held as sacred. The Christ "The Anointed One" -suffered likewise. His judgments were in accord with "the Divine good itself of the Divine love." (R. 779), represented by the anointing oil. Consecration to the love of blessing all alike makes light of every attempt to break it down. The Lord Jesus is "the only begotten son of God" decreed to exercise

power from on high to destroy man's enemies-dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel-the figments of a false imagination. Our trials are lightened the sooner we contact the love of God in the Gospel message. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

"Salvation Belongeth unto the LORD"

Psalm 3. The occasion-when David fled from Absalom; that is, when the law of love is dethroned by the law of truth. The arguments to disprove the value of any other interpretation of the law than our own, and to shew the misrepresentations of all "foreign" interpretations, are common adversaries of the good life. A little of God's love repels them and takes the bite out of argumentativeness. "The blessing of the Lord upon his people signifies the influx and reception of good and truth. They are called the people of the Lord, who are in spiritual good." (E. 340.)

Evensong

Psalm 4. A prayer for delivery from evil in times of temptation, and that the Lord may "lift up the light of his countenance upon us." "The face of the Lord is mercy, peace and every good." (A. 222.) "Charity, spiritual security and internal rest are peace." (R. 306.) "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou, O LORD, only makest me to dwell in safety."

Morning Song

Psalm 5. The evensong is accompanied by string instruments,—reminiscences; -the morning song by wind instruments, Nehiloth, -fresh resolutions for new opportunities. We pray for freedom from arrogance, iniquity, lying, unkindness and deceit. "Make thy way straight before my face." Deliver us from all evil, and "compass us with favor as with a shield."

"O LORD, Rebuke Me Not in Thine Anger"

Psalm 6. On neginoth upon sheminith, that is, on stringed instruments set to the lower octave, deep tones. All unhappiness is caused by evil. We smart under it, and are sometimes pushed to extremities that are almost unendurable. Evil is there, however, for diagnosis, and then for judgment. Salvation is nigh when we see the cause clearly, pray for help, and suppress the evil with the Lord's help.

"The LORD Shall Judge the People"

Psalm 7. Nothing is known of Cush, but 2 Sam. 18:21 may offer a parallel situation in the life of David. Shiggaion possibly indicates the setting of the psalm to a wandering, or changeful tune. The psalm is primarily a prayer by the Lord in His Human to the Father within, and secondarily an appeal by us for help from the Lord, when persecuted by evil spirits. If we had wronged our neighbor, we could have no cause for complaint. Being innocent our claim for relief is justified. God is not angry with the wicked: they whet the sword against themselves. A curse is inseparable from vindictiveness. We shall "give thanks unto the Lord according to his righteousness."

The Dignity of Man

Psalm 8. "Set to Gitteth" probably an instrument, or tune, of Gath. (1 Sam. 27.) "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise" signifies that "praise can come to the Lord by no other way than through innocence, for by this alone is effected all communication and all influx, and consequently access. No one can see the face of God except from innocence." (Matt. 18:10, A. 5236, 5608.) Man-frail man-was made only a little lower than the angels, to have dominion over nature. This is predicated in the first instance of the Lord assuming our nature in humility.. and making it Divine by ruling over all things in it. "By the flocks are signified in general all spiritual things with man, by the herds natural things with him, which correspond to spiritual, by the beasts of the fields the affections of good in the natural man which are of the church, for a field signifies the church. The birds of heaven signify the thoughts of the rational man, and the fishes of the sea scientifics." (E. 1100.)

"Thou Hast Rebuked the Nations"

Psalm 9. Set to Muth-labben, "Death to the Son." It is good to think that the Lord rules the world, not the nations as we know them, but the groups within the nations that are held together, for good, or for evil; people with different ideologies, or religions, or conceptions of right and wrong. The Lord is the power behind the throne to those who put their trust in Him. But, He is said to "make inquisition for blood," or avenge violence. In reality "the nations are sunk down in the pit that they made. . . . The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. . . . Put them in fear, O LORD. Let the nations know themselves to be but frail men." "The LORD Is King for Ever."

Psalm 10. The Psalmist draws the picture of a very wicked man, oppressing the poor, boastful, defiant, heartless, blasphemous, murderous, deceitful, and godless. Shall the Lord forget the poor, and the helpless? Shall He not break the arm of the wicked? destroy his power to harm others? All evil is organic. The infraction of one commandment involves the breaking of all of them. The Lord opens our eyes to behold the content of an evil state of mind. It is appalling. All evil is futile. "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the meek," who accept correction without resentment. "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; to judge the fatherless and oppressed, that man who is of the earth may be terrible no more."

"The Righteous LORD Loveth Righteousness"

Psalm 11. Every Christian has a lofty ideal, but finds it hard to reduce it to practical terms. When we endeavor to do so arguments are not wanting to disprove its application, and approve the ways of all flesh. The foundation of religion is at stake. The Lord is present to effect a judgment. He enables us to see the wrong and feel the assurance of his protection in upholding the right. "His eyelids try the children of men." Clinging to that opens the heart to his love with a hatred of evil that quickly consigns it to oblivion—at least for the time being. "The righteous LORD loveth righteousness: the upright doth behold his face."

"Pure Words"

Psalm 12. Set to Sheminith—the lower octave again. "The godly man ceaseth." We see the dark side of life once more—false words, flattering lips, licence in the name of freedom to say whatever we please to boost our own way. The words of the Lord are different. They are pure, like silver "tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times." The words of the Lord stood the test in his most bitter trials. They bear no comparison with the "idle words" of man. (Matt. 12:36.)

"Lighten Mine Eyes"

Psalm 13. We forget the Lord as often as we lack compassion and mercy for those in need,—and who is not in need of them? His face is hidden from us. We fail to understand the sufferings or needs of others, fail to see where we might be more just and helpful to them. Life is devoid of spirituality. That is the sleep of death. The Lord alone can lighten our eyes to know ourselves, and waken us to opportunities of sharing life in larger measure with others. "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." His mercy is everlasting.

The Return from Captivity

Psalm 14. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Everything looks black to us: we can see no good anywhere. Life is not worth living. Occasionally we meet with kindness, or light upon someone who seems to be an exception to the rule. But, things are not always as they seem. In God's sight "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." We can trust no one! Then, no one can trust us! Quite possibly. But, we can prove ourselves to be worthy. There is hope for everyone. Would to God that we could always feel that way. "When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

"There's No Place Like Home"

Psalm 15. True! Yet there is no home, be it a house, city, country, or world, worthy of that title, except in so far as it is made a tent, or tabernacle, where God dwells; that is, where God's love reigns supreme. The elements of a true home mentioned in this psalm are obvious. The last is by no means the least. A perfect home is free from usury or bribery—one for all, and all for one, "hoping for nothing again." (Lu. 6:35.)

"Thou Wilt Shew Me the Path of Life"

Psalm 16. Our path is neither smooth, nor obvious. The dangers are numerous, and at times alarming. We need the Lord's protection and guidance, for we can think of no greater privilege in life than to be one with the Lord and his holy ones. Idolatry yields only sorrows for everyone. We have so much to be grateful for. The Lord instructs us in the way, and the power to do right, or be right for the sake of others is always available. He condemns no one. We have no cause for sadness. At his right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Fellowship with God

Psalm 17. A prayer from unfeigned lips. How frequently our prayers and praise are "vain repetitions!" We need to draw ourselves together to mean what we say. We purpose to do right, and note some changes in our ways of living as a result of effort. But we need further protection, a greater horror of evils that still compass us, and a strong deliverance from wickedness and the follies of the world. Nothing short of Christian fellowship can compensate for life's trials. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

"I Will Sing Praises unto Thy Name"

Psalm 18. This song also appears in 2 Sam. 22 at the close of David's reign. The Psalmist exults in the power of God's truth. He draws upon the works of nature to illustrate its power to enlighten, and defend and save. The king thanks God for his righteousness and guiltlessness (his clean hands), and then expatiates on the victories won by God's assistance. "Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore." The song expresses the Lord's gratitude for triumph in temptation. And we may share His joy in recalling the aid extended to us in time of trial.

The Glory of Nature and Revelation

Psalm 19. The silent testimony of nature to the glory of God grows with a deeper knowledge of its wonders. For this world is only a reflection of the world within—the spiritual world—with its sun at the centre of things. "And nothing is hid from the heat thereof;" that is, from God's love. Throughout both realms,

however, we discover the reign of law, revealing the will of God for our salvation. Our smallness appears in contrast with His greatness. We pray to Him as our rock and our redeemer for freedom from presumptuousness, and every secret sin.

"Help from the Sanctuary"

Psalm 20. This is a prayer for confirmation of formal worship by signs following. (Mk. 16:20.) "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions . . . with the saving strength of his right hand." Some trust in dogma, or in intellectualism. To us "the shunning of evils is the Christian religion itself." (P. 265.) "Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call."

"The King Shall Joy in Thy Strength, O LORD"

Psalm 21. The king represents the law-the principle according to which we desire to regulate our conduct. Our effort to conform to it is crowned with success. "Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance. For the king trusteth in the LORD." The Lord's love is back of every principle that makes for righteousness, and gives promise of victories yet to follow. "Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power."

"Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

Psalm 22. "Set to Ajeleth hash-shahan" ("the hind of the morning"); probably in reference to a well-known melody, but suggestive of a live expectation of the dawn of a new day. The first part of the song is reminiscent of the Lord's crucifixion. Verses 1, 7, 8 and 18 contain verbal references to that scene. Night often comes upon us before we are aware of it. Our trial may drive us to extreme despair, but issue in a more far-reaching understanding of the Lord's Providence. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD."

"The Good Shepherd"

Psalm 23. The Lord has a personal interest in each member of his flock, to nurture kindly feelings toward others, and learn how to cooperate with them. He is always present to protect us in trouble, and through his Word to comfort and to enrich our lives to the prolongation of our days. Evil loses its hold over us.

"The King of Glory"

Psalm 24. The church is founded upon the truth men believe both spiritual and natural. They belong to the church who do right, and are pure in heart and perfectly sincere. Wheresoever, or whensoever, men are moved by the desire to establish God's kingdom on earth the call comes to open their hearts that the King of glory may enter, and so direct their lives to bring order out of chaos the world over.

Aspiration after Holiness

Psalm 25. There are many things in our lives both within and without of which we are heartily ashamed. We long to make reparation. "Shew me thy ways, O LORD . . . Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions . . . For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. . . The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant. . . O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. . . Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." Israel always represents the spiritual man.

Saints and Sinners

Psalm 26. Many of the psalms lose their force entirely when we contrast our way with the way of sinners. "I have walked in mine integrity. . . I will not sit with the wicked." We cannot judge our fellowmen without degrading ourselves. The sinners are evil spirits who are with us, about whom we should be entirely ignorant, were it not for the evil in ourselves which they stir up. They are there with us just as long as we enjoy their company. The longer we cultivate their company, the harder it is to get away from them. "Judge me, O LORD. . . gather not my soul with sinners. . . Redeem me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD."

"I Will Sing Praises unto the LORD"

Psalm 27. "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" Yes, we may not hate our enemies, but we fear them. We are afraid to speak the truth, or to be honest, or pure, or humble, or upright. We fear to renounce the company of our enemies within, whom we have treated as our friends. We risk being misunderstood, or losing prestige, or profit, or pleasure. The psalm becomes really inspiring when experience has proved us to be great cowards, and in sore need of patience and perseverance. waiting on the Lord to renew our courage, and strengthen the heart for decisive action in the time of trial.

"Lift Thy People Up for Ever"

Psalm 28. There is no more common pit into which men fall than that of justifying resentment to real or imaginary injuries. Have we ever been in that pit, or hell, dark, cold and comfortless, and hated the sight of it, or even the thought of it? The cry to God with hands "uplifted toward his holy oracle," means much. The supplication for help when tempted to fall again is never left unanswered. Our horror of the evil weakens its grip on us, until we cease to justify it, and feel the uplifting power of God's love sustaining life on a higher level.

"The Voice of the LORD"

Psalm 29. There is glory and power in the voice of the Lord to the mighty; that is, to those who are made mighty by the truth, and "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." Everything that lives in nature and in man, both body and soul, proclaims the majesty of the Divine Truth. The glory of it all appears, like the rising sun, with a growing perception of God's love in everything He has made. But especially the voice of the Lord proceeds from his Word to shatter all fallacies and evils that weaken humanity and destroy the peace of the world.

"Song at the Dedication of the House of David"

Psalm 30. The house of David represents the good of brotherly love. The Lord, "the son of David," exemplified that love in the highest degree. This song of David praises God for deliverance from evil and from a deadly sickness. It renders thanks for the restoration of joy after sorrowing, and relief from all his troubles. The Lord turned his mourning into dancing, put off his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness. "To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." This means the dedication of every least gain in life through trial to the greater happiness of others.

Trust in the Lord

Psalm 31. We naturally turn to the Lord for protection in time of trouble. Our faith needs strengthening, for we are so anxious about the morrow. We fear the worst. "Mine eye wasteth away with grief, for my life is spent in sorrow. My strength faileth because of mine iniquity." Our enemies reproach us, our friends distrust us. Deliverance follows the pursuit of constancy, even though for a time we feared that the Lord had forsaken us altogether. "O love the LORD. . . . be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD."

"Be Glad in the LORD"

Psalm 32. Life centres in our thoughts and feelings. Frequently these thoughts and feelings are evil, and sometimes they are very grievous and tenacious. They are there, however, for judgment. The clearer our judgment of their noxiousness, and the more closely we cling to right feelings, the sooner our evil thoughts loosen their grip, and at last pass into oblivion. Our transgressions are forgiven, our sins covered, and we rejoice in the work of the Lord—songs of deliverance compass us about. Submit your will to the Lord and He will guide your thoughts aright. Be not as the horse or mule held in with bit and bridle. "He that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about."

"Praise Is Comely for the Upright"

Psalm 33. Praise dies with silence, but expands with every fitting expression of it. We have good reason to thank the Lord for his Word. By it all things have been brought into existence. The Lord governs the nations in the best interests of everyone. Specially blessed is "the nation whose God is the LORD, and the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance." Neither popularity, nor self-sufficiency, nor self-intelligence can redeem humanity. "The eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, and hope in his mercy. . . . Our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."

"I Sought the LORD, and He Heard Me"

Psalm 34. A Psalm of David when he feigned madness in Philistia. Generally speaking the nation that is defeated in war and enslaved is determined to win its freedom and punish the victor. A voice that says, "This is wicked: you should love your enemies, and return good for evil" sounds like the voice of a madman. No Christian need fear to challenge the spirit of retaliation rampant in the world today; and every Christian should be free from malice in answer to his prayer, "Hallowed be thy Name." This song strengthens the soul in pursuit of this ideal. Note especially verses 4, 7, 9 and 14. The Lord came to save, and not condemn. The punishment of evil is inherent in the evil thought or deed. (See verse 21, E. 412.) "Guilt stands for all sin which remains; its separation by good from the Lord is redemption." (A. 3400.)

The Vindication of a Just Cause

Psalm 35. This psalm reflects the vindictive spirit of the times in which it was written. It could not possibly have been used in that literal sense by the Lord, the son of David. It is marvellous, however, to discover the inspiration and strength that is drawn from it immediately the literal sense is transformed into the spiritual sense, the enemies without represent the enemies within the evil in ourselves, notably fear and malice, which figured so prominently in the preceding psalm. "Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant, and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long."

"The Fountain of Life"

Psalm 36. The love of evil creates the impression that our "iniquity will not be found out and be hated." We deceive ourselves when we imagine that we can devise mischief, and be none the worse for it. A moment's consideration of the faithfulness and lovingkindness of the Heavenly Father opens our eyes to our duplicity and unworthiness. With Him alone is the fountain of life; in his light we see light. "Continue thy lovingkindness. . . . Let not the foot of pride come against me. . . . The workers of iniquity are cast down, and shall not be able to rise." "Rest in the LORD."

Psalm 37. Resting and fretting are opposites, and cannot be together. Either puts an end to the other. Why worry about the success of evildoers? Why get vexed or impatient over reverses, or rebuffs? "The meek shall inherit the earth." Fretting tends only to evil doing. To be at rest does not imply indifference, or unconcern. Rest in the Lord turns the activity wasted in fretfulness into constructive channels. We rest in the Lord as we "depart from evil, and do good," and wait patiently with confidence that, soon or late, right will triumph over wrong. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

The Lord Is My Savior

Psalm 38. This psalm is "to bring to remembrance" probably in connection with the offering of the "memorial" of incense. (Lev. 2: 2, 24:7.) It is a prayer of one in suffering, deserted by his friends (v. 11), and beset by enemies. He suffers persecution for righteousness' sake. He follows that which is good, and pleads for aid. "Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation."

"The Lord's Patience in the State of Temptations"

Psalm 39. "Silence is golden" when we are impatient under suffering. Musing on our impatience, we conclude that life is too short to waste time through loss of temper over nothing. "Man at his best state is altogether vanity." We "walk in a vain show." Neither money, nor knowledge can buy health of body, or soul. "My hope is in thee: deliver me from all my transgressions."

O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Time lost in doing our daily task is hard to make up again.

"I Waited Patiently for the LORD"

Psalm 40. We are in a horrible pit, in the depths in an inextricable mess. We long for relief. The Lord draws us upward—if we let Him,—plants our feet on a rock, establishes our goings, and puts a new song in our mouths, even praise unto our God. It is a wonderful experience, greater than exaltation in worship. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." See that experience in the light of the New

Testament, in the resurrection of the Lord! The law is then written upon the heart. Let all men know it. We live to separate good from evil, that "such as love thy salvation may say continually, The LORD be magnified."

"Heal My Soul!"

Psalm 41. A Psalm of, or to David, who represents the Lord. At the close of Passion Week the Lord was exceedingly sick at heart. There were spirits present to comfort and strengthen Him "on the bed of languishing." The disciples were sympathetic, though greatly troubled and afraid. There were also evil spirits who hated Him, and prophesied that He would "die, and his name perish." And there were spirits present who expected to profit by his betrayal, spirits with "mine own familiar friend, . . . which did eat of my bread, and lifted up his heel against me." (John 13: 18, 26.) The Lord prayed the Father to be merciful unto Him, and raise Him up to requite them. "By this I know that thou favorest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." (Rev. 3:21.) And so Book 1 of the Psalter closes with the fitting doxology: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

Book Two

"My Soul Thirsteth for the Living God"

In Book 1 the name LORD occurs 272 times, and the name God only 18 times. In this second Book the name LORD appears only 30 times, and the name God 164 times. The unpronounceable name "Jehovah" means He "who was, and who is, and who is to come," Life Itself, or Love Itself. And the name Elohim, translated God, means "Powers," as they appear in an infinite variety of forms in which Life manifests itself. "Every created thing is endowed with power; but power acts not from itself, but from Him who bestowed the power, . . . and conserves it." (P. 3.) In the Old Testament "God is said when truth, and Jehovah when good is the subject." (A. 8330, 2921.) The songs in Book 1, therefore appeal mainly to the love of God in the heart as we turn again and again to its source in the LORD, while the songs in the Book Two quicken our love of the truth as we look to its source in God for direction in the spiritual life.

Psalm 42. God's truth is now our great quest. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" We have been brought up to worship God, but have only accepted the truth on the authority of those who taught us. We now face the light independently, and are somewhat disquieted by the sight of evil within. "Where is thy God?" Where is the truth about ourselves? We hope in God, hope to know everything necessary to remove the oppression of our enemies.

Psalm 43. What is the word for today, in the trouble presently on hand? "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man (in ourselves). O send out thy light and thy truth" to lead us to thine altar, that we may praise thee in newness of life. "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

"Redeem Us for Thy Mercies' Sake"

Psalm 44. We have been told that nations were prosperous when they were true to God, or, "because God was favorable to them." We still believe that "God is our king." We believe that the truth is all powerful, and will prevail. But, it does not always work. "Thou goest not forth with our hosts. . . . and hast scattered us among the nations." The truth itself is treated with the utmost contumely in time of war, or in heated political campaigns. Nevertheless, we still believe in God. "Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. Awake, why sleepest thou? . . . Arise for our help, and redeem us, for thy mercies' sake."

God's Name Remembered in All Generations

Psalm 45. Set to Shoshannim ("lilies"). "A Song of loves:" a stately ode eulogizing the king riding on prosperously, because of truth, and meekness and righteousness. It speaks of God's throne in heaven, with the king's daughters and the queen in gold of Ophir. It is a wonderful picture of the Lord as the Anointed King, who rules over all in heaven, the queen representing the church in heaven conjoined with the Lord (the lamb's wife), and the daughters representing all who are in the affection of truth and of knowledges in the church where the Word is. All the good in humanity in the past or present bears testimony to the name of the Lord.

"God Is Our Refuge and Strength"

Psalm 46. Although "the evils of the love of self and of the world strike or dazzle the mind according to their increase," we need not fear. (E. 405.) "The Divine truth which is of the church," the river whose streams make glad the city of God, shall not perish. (E. 518.) The time will come also when the conflict in the soul of what is false against the truth will cease, and man come into the tranquillity of peace. "The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

The Kingdom of God

Psalm 47. "Clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph." The outward show, —the applause and shouting,—is unnecessary. Great joy of heart, however, is an unfailing concomitant of a growing conviction that "God is the king of all the earth. . . . God reigneth over the nations. God sitteth upon his holy throne," not literally, but spiritually. He is omniscient, and rules over the least details in the affairs of men, primarily for their eternal good, and only secondarily for their temporal welfare. (P. 214.) "Sing praises with understanding."

"The City of Our God"

Psalm 48. Here is "described the worship of the Lord from spiritual truths and goods, and the pleasure of the soul thence derived." (E. 405.) A sense of security accompanies the joy of worship, when God is known in the city's palaces for a refuge. The worldly may commend the teachings of religion, but turn away from them as unpractical, like kings who approach the city of the great king, but retire dismayed. Their practices are opposed to the spirit of love. The east wind breaks up the ships of Tarshish. The life of religion, however, is the only hope of righting wrong in the world. "This God is our God for ever. He will be our guide even unto death;" that is, the death of selfishness.

Wealth, or Honor, Saves No One

Psalm 49. It is generally acknowledged that when the rich dieth, "he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him." This is equally true of those who accumulate a wealth of knowledges, and pride themselves in their possessions. Lasting wealth and honor are acquired only by the use of wealth and prestige, great or little, to "redeem his brother;" that is, to relieve suffering in the world, and make life richer for everyone.

The Salvation of God

Psalm 50. This psalm poetizes the Lord's words, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13.) From "the saints" the Lord expects more than sacrifices. He asks for praise, obedience and prayer. Sacrifice from "the wicked" is hypocritical. Worse follows unless they repent of their sins, "order their way aright," and see the salvation of God.

Psalm 51. The sin of David covers every offence against the love of the neighbor, and his repentance shews the way of salvation-the principle in operation for all men that can alone establish the kingdom of God on earth, as in heaven. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. . . . Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," the defence against yielding to temptation at all times.

The Goodness of God

Psalm 52. God's goodness never changes. Why should the tongue of a mighty man lend itself to deceit, and mischief, as in Doeg's massacre of the priests of Nob? (1 Sam. 22.) The tongue works deceitfully, like a sharp razor, when plotting for power, even though the words are unspoken. Approval of them destroys the power of the tongue for good, "roots it out of the land of the living." Why not cut out the mischievous thoughts, and "laugh;" that is, rejoice in the mercy of the Lord for ever.

"When God Bringeth Back the Captivity"

Psalm 53. The Lord says that the man who hears his sayings, and does them not, is a fool. (Matt. 7:24.) "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." We deny the existence of God regardless of our professions, when we deny, or reject, God's help to change our lives, or the world, for the better. Psalm 14, which is almost word for word the same as this psalm, reads: "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." In this psalm it reads: "God looked down from heaven, etc." The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom are constantly operating to uncover our waywardness, and lead us out of captivity.

"Save Me, O God, by Thy Name"

Psalm 54. "To the chief musician on stringed instruments," when the Ziphim informed Saul of David's hiding place. (1 Sam. 23:19, 26:1.) A simple prayer for deliverance from any enemy with the sinister purpose of betraying the Lord, or, in practical life, proving false to our neighbor. Rewarding evil to the enemy is not returning evil for evil, but means "cutting him off in truth," and thus putting an end to the temptation. "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it." (John 14:14.)

"Give Ear to My Prayer, O God"

Psalm 55. "These things are said concerning temptations in which evils and fables break in from hell and strike with terror for fear of damnation, for the good are terrified and tremble from imminent dangers of the soul, thus from the irruption of evils into the thoughts and intentions of the will." (E. 677.) The delight of uplifting spiritual thinking (the wings of a dove) promises relief, but sometimes leaves us wandering in the wilderness. More than elevated thinking is necessary to salvation. "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me." Self- condemnation by the truth opens the heart to receive the Divine Love that saves. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD. . . . and God shall bring them (the evil thoughts and intentions) down into the pit of destruction."

"This I Know, That God Is for Me"

Psalm 56. Set to Jonath-elem-rechokim ("the dove of the distant terebinths"). When the Philistines took David in Gath. "Be merciful unto me, O God." The truth condemns, and we call for mercy. "They be many that fight against me. . . . They hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. . . . In thine anger cast down the people, O God." The change comes when God's Love takes possession of the heart. "In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. . . . For thou hast delivered my soul from death: hast thou not delivered my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"

"A Song in Praise of the Father"

Psalm 57. Set to Al-taschith ("Destroy not," a vintage song. Isa. 65:8). When David fled from Saul in the cave. "The letter kills, the spirit giveth life." (2 Cor. 3:6.) "I will cry unto God. . . . My soul is among the lions." The life of the understanding formed from truths is threatened with destruction by falsities, and crafty reasoning from them. (E. 455, 750.) "My heart is fixed, O God, I will sing praises. . . . For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the skies. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth." We glory in the power of the truth, but the warmth of the saving power of love lies hidden in the background.

"God Judgeth in the Earth"

Psalm 58. Set to Al-taschith. "Destroy not" good will through the violence of your hands in the earth." "Poisonous serpents signify those who are full of guile." (A. 4918.) They also stop their ears, they are deaf to the voice of the truth. A cry for relief is never in vain. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance," not retaliation, but liberation from evil. The psalm reveals the process of eliminating guile from our systems, guile that estranged us from God, since the time that we were little children. As we mark how its grip on us is loosened, we can say, "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

"God Is My High Tower"

Psalm 59. Set to Al-taschith. "Destroy not" mercy. "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill David." "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God, and save me from the bloodthirsty men who lie in wait for my soul." Malice is a very common enemy. Like the dogs in the east, the scavengers that howl in the streets by night, malice picks up scandal, or gossip, with avidity, and howls about it when it appears to be to self-interest to do so. "But I will sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning: for thou hast been my high tower and a refuge in the day of my distress."

"Through God We Shall Do Valiantly"

Psalm 60. Shushan-eduth ("the lily of the testimony"). When David strove with Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab smote Edom. Hundreds of irrational thoughts and mean feelings (Aram and Edom) pass through the mind daily. They are pestiferous and sometimes wear us out by their persistence. "O God, thou hast shewed thy people hard things." We have only to look around, however, to see the Lord at work in ways and places that seem to be of little account. We may take these as an assurance that "vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that will tread down our enemies."

"Hear My Cry, O God"

Psalm 61. Neginah is a stringed instrument. The heart is overwhelmed. "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. . . . I will trust in the covert of thy wings. . . . Thou wilt prolong the king's life"—my faith in Thee—"and his years as many generations. . . . O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows."

"My Soul Waiteth Only for God"

Psalm 62. To Jeduthun ("a choir of praise"). Our life is out of joint, blessing outwardly, but cursing inwardly. "With God is my salvation. . . . Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." The knowledge of God alone is inadequate to our need. Set not the heart on riches; power belongeth to God—the power of love and wisdom. "Twice have I heard this." And these two must produce results. That is power and mercy in action. "For thou renderest to every man according to his work."

"Thy Lovingkindness Is Better than Life."

Psalm 63. "A psalm of David. when he was in the wilderness of Judah." (1 Sam. 22:5, 2 Sam. 23-28.) The Lord's trials when meeting the cheerless spirit of dogmatism in the Church. We have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary, and bless Him for it. But, we have also seen and felt the uncharitableness of those who criticise the opposing beliefs and opinions of others. Censorious criticism is invariably accompanied by misrepresentations and lies. "The king shall rejoice in God; everyone that sweareth by him shall glory: for the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Mendacity destroys veracity.

Psalm 64. This psalm presents the effect of lying on the heart. "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked. . . . who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, (not lying words, but) bitter words: they shoot in secret at the perfect; . . . they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? They search out iniquities: . . . both the inward thought and the heart of every one is deep. But God shall shoot at them; with an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall be made to stumble, their tongue being against them. . . . The righteous shall be glad in the LORD; . . . and all the upright shall glory," when rescued from it.

"Praise Waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion"

Psalm 65. "A Psalm and Song of David." "From the uniting of the Divine and the Human in the Lord will be a church that will be in all truth from the Lord, and safe from infestation from falsities." The parallel to this in ourselves lies in taking the thorn out of the flesh,—every lust contrary to the Spirit of the Lord, and being fashioned wholly within and without in the image and likeness of the Father above. "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come;" that is, every man. (A. 574.)

"Make a Joyful Noise unto God, All the Earth"

Psalm 66. It is a real joy to mark evidences, be they ever so slight, of the life of religion in the world today. The passage of the Red Sea and River Jordan bears evidence to God's works in the past. Now the proof is in the lives of men and women who are being led out of worldly and selfish ways to sacrifice all they have or are in serving their fellowmen. "O bless our God, ye peoples, . . . for thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. . . . and thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." We owe a debt to the church and society, and they who fear God should bear personal testimony to what He has done for their souls, not turning away from their prayers, nor his lovingkindness from them.

"God Cause His Face to Shine upon Us"

Psalm 67. This expression "implies intelligence and wisdom, for from Divine Truth, or the Divine light in the heavens are derived all the wisdom and intelligence both of angels and men." (E. 412.) The light makes known God's ways upon earth, his salvation among all nations, or good people. He governs all men for their eternal good. He blesses all who desire to do right with spiritual blessings. "And all the ends of the earth shall fear him," that is, dread to do aught that would vex Him, or hurt anyone.

"God Giveth Strength and Power unto His People"

Psalm 68. A good understanding of God's Word reveals how the Lord works to separate good from evil, and truth from falsity in the world (vv. 1-6.) Churches have existed in the past by instruction from heaven (rain), and a code of laws, or rules of life (Sinai). The humble have always been fed from above (vv. 7-18). Prophets and judges, or saviors, have been sent to deliver them from evil, and unite them in the defence of the right (vv. 19-27). The outstanding principles of religion have never been lacking. And the power to do the will of God has ever been present and available. Therefore, "ascribe ye strength to God. . . . Blessed be God."

"They Gave Me Also Gall for My Food"

Psalm 69. A translation of the language of parable in this psalm into the vernacular would furnish us with a better understanding of the Lord's temptations, particularly those on the cross. This commentary, however, only hints at the growth of the God-consciousness—the tree of life—in man, which is far far below the growth of the consciousness of the Father—the tree of life also in the Son of man. The psalm throws light on the later sufferings of the righteous, with their pleas for mercy, and their praise on deliverance from evil, in exemplification of the Lord's glorification.

"Make Haste, O God, to Deliver Me"

Psalm 70. "O LORD, make haste to help me" is the wording in Psalm 40:13-17. Compare the two carefully, and note how they present the two sides of the prayer—from the heart, and from the head; as we feel it, and as we see it. Each is complementary to the other, as Father and Son, love and faith.

"In Thee, O LORD, Do I Take Refuge"

Psalm 71. The heart speaks here in prayer (vv. 1-13), and thanksgiving (vv. 14-24). Note especially verses 6, 9, 17 and 18. That which openeth the womb is that which is born of charity, or the faith of charity, which makes the spiritual of man, or the new man himself (A. 8043, E. 710). The Lord "was the Father's from birth." Old age, frail and grayheaded, turning white (Rev. 1:14), represent the maturation of wisdom. Life's burdens grow heavier as we assume new and greater responsibilities, and learn to bear them with courage, and with grace.

"Give the King Thy Judgments, O God"

Psalm 72. "A Psalm of Solomon," who represents the higher law of love. It opens with a prayer to know how to practice love to the neighbor ("the king"—David), and love to the Lord ("the king's son" -- Solomon), until "faith will be love" ("the moon shall be no more." A. 337). For when "love is the fulfilment of the law," or supreme in human affairs, "all nations shall serve him." The world then shall enjoy true prosperity and peace. "His Name shall endure for ever. . . . Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel; . . . and blessed be his glorious Name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

Book Three

"Truly God Is Good to Israel"

Psalm 73. "God is good to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The old old problem is before us again, the use and the abuse of power and wealth. The abuse of God's gifts always brings adversity and suffering soon or late. The prosperous at others' expense have no bands, or trouble, like other men. They are conscienceless, but plagued with fears and lusts that can never be gratified. Envy makes us one with them. "It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord Jehovah, that I may declare all thy works."

"O God, Why Hast Thou Cast Us Off for Ever"

Psalm 74. Of old the enemy destroyed God's sanctuary. Today religion is put on the scrap heap by the denial of Christianity (ruining the dwelling place of thy Name), by ignoring the prophets, by sensuality and the abuse of knowledge (leviathan), and by false ideologies (cleaving the fountains and drying up rivers). There are those, however, who are not wholly carried away by the spirit of their times (the seasons), and who seek to preserve pure loving thoughts (thy turtle doves) from destruction, and pray that God will sustain "the poor and needy" soul in the midst of increasing disorders.

"The Horns of the Righteous Shall Be Exalted"

Psalm 75. Set to Al-taschith—"Destroy not" good will "defending what is false against the truth." (E. 316.) "The Lord's name is near: men tell of thy wondrous works." The church (the earth) is dissolved when she fails to teach the truths that men need. "Because truths support the church they are called its pillars which God bears up." (E. 304.) Natural truths too, for they are the support to the spiritual. (A. 8106.) "The horns of the wicked stand for the power of falsity from evil, the horns of the just for the power of truth from good. (A. 2832.) The cup represents suffering for truth's sake. When men are put to the test, the horns of the wicked will be cut off, the power to stand up for Jesus will prevail, "the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."

"In Judah Is God Known"

Psalm 76. Where love dwells—a love purified and perfected through conflict in the world's arena—there God dwells and is known. We have fought out a few issues and found peace in certain firm and fixed convictions. The deductions from false thinking that troubled us possibly for years have now no place in our lives. "The chariot and the horse are cast into a dead sleep." With live issues, however, where we need to know more both in theory and practice, we wait in silence; "when God arose in judgment, to save the meek of the earth;"—those who can stand correction to get on the right side. Then surely "the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The Lord never tests us beyond our strength. As we are able to bear more "He will cut off the spirit of princes: He is terrible to the kings of the earth;"—false principles nationalism, monopoly, etc.

"Hath God Forgotten to Be Gracious?"

Psalm 77. We know that God hears our cry in the day of trouble, but sometimes the soul refuses to be comforted. We cannot confess his goodness. What God did in ancient times does not touch us. A psalm does not affect us in the night. God seems to have forgotten us altogether. Suddenly we realise that this is our infirmity, not God's. We muse upon his doings in a new mood. Everything then looks different. There is much good in the world. The Word is full of light, genuine truths appear with a real bearing on our lives, and a returning sense of the presence of the Lord that is overpowering. Surely the guiding hand of Providence is made plain in some of our trying experiences.

"Forget Not the Works of God"

Psalm 78. This psalm rehearses the exodus and life in the wilderness two times, and then refers to the conquest of Canaan, and the life there until the time of David, dwelling upon Israel's inconstancy, ending in the special condemnation of Ephraim (vv. 9-11), and the rejection of Shiloh in Ephraim for Jerusalem in Judah as the place of God's sanctuary. The repetition of history emphasises the involvement of both the head and the heart in the spiritual experiences there represented. The failure of Ephraim represents the inadequacy of the understanding of God's Word to cope with an unruly will. Zion in Judah was chosen as the site of the sanctuary, and David taken from the sheepfold to rule, or feed, "Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance," indicative of the supremacy of love to restore heaven on earth.

"O God, the Nations Have Laid Jerusalem in Heaps"

Psalm 79. "Falsifications of the Word and direful evils have destroyed the church. The cry of the church for help, that she be not destroyed at the same time, and her prayer that those who have ruined the church be removed, that thus there will be worship of the Lord." The psalm expresses the objective of every true laborer in the Lord's vineyard, and the cry of every sufferer for relief in temptation.

"Turn Us Again, O God, and We Shall Be Saved"

Psalm 80. Set to "the lilies of the testimony"—pure words. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." Our hearts long to have the Lord lead his flock out of the danger zone. "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt," and it grew till "the mountains were covered with the shadow of it." Why do the beasts of the field ravage it, and feed on it? "It is burned with fire, it is cut down." Neighborly love is destroyed by lust and passions, because we have turned from the Lord. "Turn us again, O God. . . . O God of hosts, O LORD God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Sing Aloud unto God, Our Strength."

Psalm 81. "Take a psalm, bring hither the timbrel and harp, blow the trumpet on our feast day, for it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob." We pass through the experiences of our earlier years, both pleasant and unpleasant, again and again, learning more and more of their content. As we gain in character and interpret all in the light of God's Word, the psalms become truly "songs exalting the life of love, and the joy of life." (R. 279.)

"Arise, O God, Judge the Earth"

Psalm 82. The "gods" are under impeachment, because they judge unjustly. They are swayed by self-interest: they overlook the interests of the poor and fatherless and afflicted, who ought to receive more consideration in this world. They who are always thinking about themselves neither know nor understand the sufferings directly due to their selfishness, or the selfishness of others with like interests. "They walk

on in darkness." They are "gods", powers for good, knowing the truth. "They possess the Word, but they will perish," because they fail to practice it. Selfishness dissociates a man from his fellowmen, and his God too. "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

"O God, Keep Not Thou Silence"

Psalm 83. The Psalmist appeals to God for intervention in a secret conspiracy of the neighboring nations to exterminate God's children. "Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." The enemies that seek to destroy religion are within us. The evil do not know that the Lord rules all men, when in the nature of things their plans fail utterly. But we do learn from experience that Love Itself is above all, the central power in the universe, when it is the selfless motive within that enables us to overcome all evil opposed to it.

NOTE. The preceding psalm marks the turning point from God to the LORD. Psalms 1-41 are Jehovistic, Psalms 42-83 are Elohist, and Psalms 84-150 are again Jehovistic. The starting point of all the inspiration, or momentum, for the good life is in the Divine Love. The Divine Wisdom directs the momentum to useful ends. And the renewal of the momentum and inspiration in its forward and upward trend is again from the Divine Love. From centre to circumference, and back again to the centre is the order of perpetual motion, as illustrated in the motion of the planets and suns; the motion of water from ocean to cloudland, and back again to the ocean; and in all growth, animal or vegetable, from seed to seed, from "dust to dust", with endless repetition, and infinite variation. "Such a circle of love to thoughts and from thoughts to love from love is in all things of the human mind. This circle may be called the circle of life. Angels constantly turn their faces to the Lord as a sun. Angels are in the Lord, and the Lord is in them; and because angels are recipients the Lord alone is in heaven." (P. 29.) The return to the centre for an augmented inspiration and strength is especially indicated in Book 5, in which the name LORD occurs 236 times, and Elohim only 20 times.

"How Amiable Are Thy Tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts"

Psalm 84. How lovely are the homes in which every one is actuated by God's love. We wish every home was of that order. In such a home even the commonest thoughts laden with kindly feeling are precious. Happy are they who dwell in such a home. It is a real stronghold. It inspires everyone to vie with the others to increase the joy in it. When trouble comes- the valley of weeping -it opens new springs of life, and fresh thoughts of helpfulness -the early rain from heaven. In that home "they go from strength to strength," everyone whose life is bound up in the happiness of others. We pray for it. How much better to open the door when the opportunity offers to serve, than to be always thinking of ourselves first. It is hard to attain. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

"The LORD Will Give That Which Is Good"

Psalm 85. We are conscious that the Lord has moderated our obstinacy—brought back the captivity of Jacob. There are times when we do feel differently about persons whom we could not tolerate. Yet, we have spells of waywardness. We are not perfect. "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease." We hear the voice of peace, and then again we turn to folly. "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him." And so we alternate from good to evil, and from evil to good. "Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."

"Thou, LORD, Hast Helped Me, and Comforted Me"

Psalm 86. We pray for help in temptations. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all who call upon thee." There is none among the gods like the Lord: nor any works like his works. The life of religion is the heavenly life. It is the only life that yields lasting satisfaction, is tireless and free from any thought of self. Conceit and violence disturb our peace of mind, but lovingkindness gives comfort and strength to resist and overcome them.

"The LORD Loveth the Gates of Zion"

Psalm 87. Mount Zion represents love on an altogether higher level than the world. The gates of "the city of God," never shut, represent the ever present opportunity of exercising that love in every walk of life. "Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her." Every form of love originated in the love of God—the love of knowledge, and wisdom, the love of work, the love of play, aye, and the love of dominion, or ruling, for the good of others. There is no love of evil of any kind that is not the perversion of a love that was pure from the hand of the Lord in the beginning. "All my springs are in thee."

"LORD, Why Hidest Thou Thy Face from Me"

Psalm 88. The meaning of the title is uncertain. The psalm gives utterance to the Lord's appeal to the Father in temptations that continued even to despair, when He was seemingly overcome by the infernals. "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? . . . and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? . . . Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. . . . Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." It is understandable only so far as we have wrestled with the enemy in the night, and wondered if we should ever see the light of day again.

"The LORD'S Lovingkindness"

Psalm 89. "Mercy shall be built up for ever" with the throne of David, which represents the law of equal rights for all. This is the law of heaven. "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face". Happy are they who walk in the light of his countenance. "I have found David my servant." I have anointed him: I will make him my firstborn. My covenant will I not break. His seed shall endure for ever. This is prophetic of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who fulfilled the covenant. We have broken it and "profaned his crown by casting it to the ground." We have spurned the wisdom of the Lord's fulfilment of the law, and given evil a free rein. So it appeared at the crucifixion that evil had triumphed over good. "O LORD, how long? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? . . . What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" Unless the Lord had shortened these days, no flesh could have been saved. The doxology breathes the assurance in death of the resurrection. "Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen."

Book Four

"The Days of Our Years"

Psalm 90. "A prayer of Moses the man of God." Moses represents the law, by which our states of mind are reckoned, arranged and disposed. Life is transient, God alone is without time. The past, present and future are alike to Him. The allotment of life, seventy or eighty years, does not refer to the body. Moses lived 120 years. Our days are passed away in God's wrath, our secret sins appear in the light of his countenance. We are born again when we see ourselves in that light. We carry a considerable burden when we specify where we-not other people-do wrong in thought, word and deed, and restrain bad habits. But our days are full of labor and sorrow before we have entirely changed our nature, and live in the light. "So teach us to number our days"—order our lives bit by bit—"that we may get us a heart of wisdom." Then may we thank the Lord for all our sufferings. The return bears no ratio to the price paid.

"The LORD Is My Refuge and My Fortress"

Psalm 91. It is one thing to shun evil because it hurts our reputation. It is quite another thing to shun it as a sin against God, and hurtful to the neighbor. Trusting in the Lord He delivers us from hurting or destroying good thoughts and intentions, and protects us from secret, or open, false justifications of evil; as also from secret, or open, evils. (vv. 3, 5, 6.) The Lord's love makes us strong in any emergency to resist evil even until it loses its power to hurt. It has no attraction or appeal. "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

Thanksgiving for Rest after Labor

Psalm 92. A song for the Sabbath Day. The stringed instruments for the accompaniment are expressive of joy and gladness, particularly in confessions from spiritual truths. (E. 323.) A brutish man fails to see the beauty in spiritual truths. Wickedness comes to the surface for judgment. Righteousness bears evidence to the saving power of the Lord (palm tree), and to sound reasoning (the cedars of Lebanon), planted in the soul, and bearing fruit in the ripest years of life.

"The LORD Reigneth"

Psalm 93. Seven psalms celebrate the Lord as King, the one hundredth psalm serving as a doxology. The Lord took upon Him our nature to meet and overcome all the evil in it, and thereby establish and defend his church in heaven and on earth for ever. The floods, mentioned three times, signify "all things which are of man's intelligence, both in the internal and in the external man. (E. 518.) Power and salvation are in the voice, or meaning of these truths in relation to life. "Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thy house, O LORD, for ever." God's rule guarantees moral order in the world.

"LORD, How Long Shall the Wicked Triumph?"

Psalm 94. "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself." Churches have come and gone. What shall prevent the repetition of failure now? "All the workers of iniquity boast themselves. . . . They say, the LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." The world is learning through suffering the futility of wrongdoing. The upright in heart shall follow judgment unto righteousness. They place confidence in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. The LORD our God shall cut off the wicked in their own wickedness.

"O Come, Let Us Sing unto the LORD"

Psalm 95. "For the LORD is a great God, and a great king above all gods." He is the Creator of the world—the Lord Jesus Christ—and the Shepherd of his people. Harden not your hearts as did your fathers in the past, "unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." They held the Lord responsible for their failure. We know better. That is a common defence mechanism to shift the responsibility from our own shoulders, where it rightfully belongs. We are no longer fooled by the appearance, or ought not to be fooled by it.

"O Sing unto the LORD a New Song"

Psalm 96. "Shew forth his salvation from day to day. . . . All the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. . . . Give unto the LORD glory and strength. . . . Say among the nations, the LORD reigneth. . . . Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: . . . for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

"Let the Multitude of Isles Be Glad"

Psalm 97. This song refers to those who do not have the Word, and are "consequently remote from spiritual truths." "They are only in natural truths." (E. 741.) "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all peoples have seen his glory. Let them be put to shame that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods." The responsibility rests upon those who have the Word to spread the light by lives bearing witness to the holy Name of the Lord.

"Make a Joyful Noise before the LORD, the King"

Psalm 98. A noise expresses the intensity of "the exaltation of the new life of love, and hence of joy" in the Lord's salvation. (R. 279.) "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." The floods clapping their hands, and the hills being Joyful together tell of the glorification of the Lord in the infinite variety of new views of the good life representing different individualities in wondrous harmony. "With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."

"Exalt the LORD, and Worship at His Footstool"

Psalm 99. The thought in this song is centred in the Lord's presence in the Sacred Scriptures. These are his footstool. Moses and Aaron among his priests represent the law and its interpretations to meet human needs. And "Samuel among them that call upon his name" represents the prophet announcing the word for action. "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the LORD our God is holy."

"Serve the LORD with Gladness"

Psalm 100. The jubilate, "A Song in praise of the Lord, that He is to be worshipped with the heart, because He is the Former of the church." "Come before his presence with singing." Every day brings many openings for the application of religion to life, and the practice of religion. "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."

"A Perfect Heart"

Psalm 101. The man who thinks he is perfect stands alone: no one else believes it. The perfection of the Lord's character is admitted, and recognised the more we see that He knew all that is in man, and successfully measured His strength with the worst in man. The more we are humiliated by our imperfections, and do something to rectify them by the help of the Lord, the more nearly we approach the perfection of the Father in heaven. (L. 84.) "The evil will perish when the Lord comes." "Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the LORD."

"Ring Out the Old, Ring in the New"

Psalm 102. All change is attended with uncomfortable premonitions, feelings of loneliness, absent-mindedness, and aversion. "My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever. . . . Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." They cling to the letter, and there is power in it. The old garment, however, must go; the spirit will take the place of the letter. "Thou art the same, and thy years have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." New truths will be drawn from the Word to supply the needs of each rising generation."

"Bless the LORD, O My Soul"

Psalm 103. How beautiful! How comforting! Renewing the innocence of youth like the eagle, rising to higher altitudes, and taking in an ever expanding view of life, and the mercy of the Lord in all his dealings with us frail human creatures to the end of life, and in its continuation beyond the grave.

"Song in Praise of the LORD"

Psalm 104. This song celebrates the glory of God in nature, which is as a theatre representing "the progress of regeneration, or the formation of the church in man." (E. 405.) "From the Lord are Divine truths, or the Word. (vv. 1-4.) Of the sense of the letter on which the church is founded (vv. 5-9). From this all are taught, every one according to the state of his intelligence (vv. 10-23). From this are the knowledges of truth and good, from which is spiritual nourishment (vv. 24-30). May the good be saved and the evil perish (vv. 31-35);" that is, the evil in ourselves.

"The LORD Hath Remembered His Covenant"

Psalm 105. A song descriptive in its inner meaning of "the establishment of the church, and the reformation of the natural man." The covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob assured them of the possession of the promised land. The Lord protected the children of Israel in going down into Egypt, in leading them out of it, and throughout their sojourn in the wilderness, until they regained possession of their lost inheritance, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. How wonderfully the story sets forth the steps in entering into the spiritual life, called heaven, in the keeping of God's laws.

Israel Confesses His Apostasy

Psalm 106. The Psalmist takes the same historical retrospect, but now refers to the ingratitude and rebelliousness of Israel on each occasion. It is good to thank the Lord for past mercies. Our thanks are deepened by the consciousness that the Lord blessed us in spite of all our lapses and waywardness. But best of all are the thanks that are free from pain, free from the memory of things said and done to the hurt of others. Perfect gratitude exists only in the fullest use of God's gifts, without any abuse of them, after the Lord's own example. He was tempted from childhood to the last of his life, but had light from the Word to expose the evil, and strength from the Father's love within to meet and overcome it at the time, so that no man could convict Him of sin. (John 8:46.) We might go through early life without doing and saying so many things for which we are sorry. But we live in the sight of God as well as in the sight of the world, and there is much that is corrupt and unsightly in the inside of the cup. As regards ought to be done in setting our house in order we may say, "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise." And for past mercies we gratefully sing: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD."

Book Five

The Lovingkindness of the LORD

Psalm 107. The best evidence of the Lord's lovingkindness is in making all things new, man himself in particular. There are many who are misfits in life. They do not know where they belong. The Lord finds friends for them who stimulate in them a new joy in working for better conditions—"a city of habitation." There are others who do wrong and condemn correction. The Lord leads them into the light, and bends their wills to his own. Then there are fools—they who know, but heed not,—bad people. The Lord gives them a taste for better things and "delivers them from their destructions." And there are those who love "religion," but only to lose patience with everyone who is "irreligious." The Lord cures their insanity, and puts their wisdom to better account in sound reconstruction work. In every vicissitude in life the Lord is at work bringing good out of evil.

"O God, My Heart Is Fixed"

Psalm 108. This psalm is composed of portions of the 57th and 60th psalms. It remains Elohist, and is thus complementary to the preceding Jehovistic psalm. "Love can do nothing apart from wisdom, and wisdom can do nothing apart from love. (P. 3.) A new world is in the making, and the Lord is bringing unused forces in man to life to effect change on all planes of it. "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

A Curse on Mine Enemy!

Psalm 109. "Let his prayer become sin. . . . Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be vagabonds. . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him." There are many who have felt that way toward others who have wronged them. This curse in our hearts is our real enemy, one of the most insidious and dangerous enemies that wounds our hearts, finds us weak kneed for lack of God's love,—the bread of life. It is a sore trial to get that curse out of our hearts, every bit of it, and love our enemies, return good for evil. "I will greatly praise the LORD, . . . for he will stand at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

"The LORD at Thy Right Hand"

Psalm 110. "The LORD said to my Lord" "signifies the essential Divine, which is called the Father, to the Divine Human, which is the Son." (E. 687.) "By the right hand is signified the power, or omnipotence which Divine truth has from Divine good. The hells and the evils and falses thence derived are the foes to be placed for his footstool, and in the midst of whom He was to have dominion." (A. 10019.) The priesthood of the Lord represented "all the work of the salvation of the human race. . . . Melchizedek is 'the king of justice.' (Gen. 14:18.) Thus the Lord was called from his being made justice, and thereby salvation." (A. 9809.) "The Lord at thy right hand will strike through kings in the day of his wrath." He will pierce through every unholy principle by which men swear as the only means of gaining success in this world.

"The Fear of the Lord Is the Beginning of Wisdom"

Psalm 111. "The works of the LORD are great," and to be remembered. He hath showed his people the power of them in recovering their lost inheritance. His works are truth and justice, done in truth and uprightness. The fear of Him is the fear of doing aught that dishonors his Name, and lets others down. That fear opens our eyes to weaknesses in ourselves which would otherwise have been unknown to us. It is an attribute of wisdom that we take note of sin, and beware that we fall not into it.

"Blessed Is the Man That Feareth the LORD"

Psalm 112. His is the true wealth of knowledge of that which ennobles life. "A good man sheweth favor, and lendeth." All he possesses is of value only so far as it can be put to the highest use. He is not upset by trouble: he looks for the cause in the hope of removing it. His goodness is lasting,—everlasting. "The desire of the wicked shall perish" in him, when he has reached the point of being above temptation, the state of the angels.

"Praise the Name of the LORD"

Psalm 113. Let everyone who has the love of God in his heart in any degree bless the name of the Lord. He is the All-Highest, who humbleth Himself "to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." He gives of Himself to anyone—the most ignorant—who desires to know the truth and to do it, until he becomes a leader among men, and helps to build up the church on earth again.

"When Israel Went Forth Out of Egypt"

Psalm 114. Every born citizen of this world who is determined to speak the language of heaven learns to sanctify the love of God, and to regulate his affairs by the law of love. He sees apparently insuperable barriers in the false teachings of the world and the false teachings of the church (the Red Sea and Jordan). These, however, are miraculously set aside when he trusts in the Lord, and reverences his Word. And this opens the way to the new life, and an abundant supply of truth to live by from the Word—"a pool of water from the rock, and a fountain of waters from the flint."

[Although there is a Psalm 115, Hoeck omits it from his commentary.]

"I Love the Lord, because He Heareth My Voice"

Psalm 116. "I found trouble and sorrow," but the answer to my cry never failed. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. I will take the cup of salvation (my cup runneth over), and call upon the name of the Lord. . . . I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving. . . . in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem."

Psalm 117. Let everyone that hath any good or truth in him praise the Lord, "for his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Hallelujah."

"The Stone Which the Builders Rejected"

Psalm 118. "The LORD is good. . . . I will not fear what man can do unto me,"—my own frailties. The Name of the Lord is all powerful to conquer any and every weakness in self. "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly," when "exalted." "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD." The church has failed in the past because she rejected the foundation truth of the Lord's saving grace. It is ours to make it "the head of the corner," and rejoice and be glad in the illumination in truths which follows, together with its power "to conjoin all things of worship," in our inner and in our outward life. This is involved in binding "the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

"The Law of the LORD is Perfect, Restoring the Soul"

Psalm 119. "The Lord fulfilled the law, or the Word, from its firsts to its lasts, and therefore He was hated and suffered temptations, and thus made the Human one with the Divine." (vv. 1-176). "By testimonies and commandments are signified such things as teach life, by the law and precepts those which teach doctrine, and by statutes and judgments, or ordinances, those which teach rituals." (E. 392.) The spirit shines through the letter, and perennially renews the inspiration to be faithful to the law of the Lord. At the same time the uplift enables us to see evil within from a higher level, and realise the tenacity of its grip upon us. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." (v. 176.) The "Songs of Ascents" which follow accompany the pilgrim on his way from captivity to a new freedom. (Matt. 15:24.)

"In My Distress I Cried unto the LORD"

Psalm 120. Our special prayer is, "Deliver my soul from lying lips. . . . I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." Following our accustomed experience, whenever we see further heights to be scaled, further difficulties, or evil, to be encountered, we have to deal with self-justifications of that evil, as if to increase our difficulties, and discourage us to the limit. "They are for war."

"I Will Lift up Mine Eyes unto the Mountains"

Psalm 121. Help comes from the Lord who made the heaven of angels and the church on earth. He will not suffer us to wander from the path of rectitude. He constantly protects us from being hurt by evil and falsity. "By the sun is here understood the love of self, and by the moon the false thence derived. Since all evil is from that love, and from evil what is false," (E. 401), therefore, "the LORD will keep thee from all evil. . . . He will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

"Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem"

Psalm 122. Worship, public or private, should be a joy at all times—Sundays or weekdays. The gates of the city are always open; the opportunities for getting closer to our neighbor, instead of further away from him, are always present. Jerusalem is a compact city. The thrones of David are there. Our minds are always active forming judgments under the Lord's guidance that affect our personal relationships with others. Right judgments follow when we seek peace through the consideration of the best interests of all concerned, and so far as we are prepared to sacrifice personal gain for the good of others. "Because of the house of the LORD our God; (that is, God's home), I will seek thy good."

"We Are Filled with Contempt"

Psalm 123. Self-love, however, is often so overbearing as to persuade us that well-wishing is God's will. We do not see it at the time, but results open our eyes to the truth, much to our discomfiture. The servant-our human nature-was to blame. As an offending servant looks for mercy, so we call for mercy for negligence and "contempt of the proud." We were so sure of our judgment, that no one dared question it. It was God's judgment!

"If It Had Not Been the LORD Who Was on Our Side"

Psalm 124. Self-conviction for an offence and all the consequences of it for others is hard to bear. There is turmoil in the soul, and we must have been overwhelmed if we had failed to keep as close to the Lord as possible. "Blessed be the LORD who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. . . . Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

"They That Trust in the LORD Are as Mount Zion"

Psalm 125. It is very comforting to know that the Lord safeguards whatever progress we have made in well-doing from corruption or destruction. He does not let us see more of ourselves at a time than we can bear. "The sceptre of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous." We have good reason to be thankful that the Lord protects us from harm. "Peace shall be upon Israel."

"Turn Again Our Captivity, O LORD"

Psalm 126. We have an experience of heavenly joy when we have succeeded in submitting our wills, after much suffering, to God's will in one thing, or in one way. The experience may be repeated again and again, giving us a better understanding of the truth, and its application to life. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed (the truth he is in the effort to live by), shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

"Except the LORD Build the House"

Psalm 127. Religion in private and public life (home and city), is the Lord's gift to man, for his acceptance of it. We often find it hard, however, to accept it. "We eat the bread of toil." Every time, however, we are cooperative in penitence, and self-will is quiescent, or asleep, the Lord is at work building character. Children are the heritage of the Lord. They represent live thoughts and feelings that enlarge one's household, and give us courage to meet the "enemies in the gate" in the attempt to attempt to destroy them.

"Thou Shalt See Thy Children's Children"

Psalm 128. Happy is the man who fears God and walks in his ways. He eats of the labor of his hands: gets great satisfaction from the study of the precepts by which he lives. His wife represents "the spiritual affection for the truth in all the things which he thinks and does." (E. 340.) The vine and the olive specify the quality of their thinking for better citizenship and churchmanship. Whenever the love of the truth forms a belief for practical life, that is their child. Our children are the practical ideas that make the morale of this generation. Our children's children that will bring peace upon Israel must represent the nobler conceptions of life in subsequent generations that will make, and not simply dream of, a world-democracy.

"The Cords of the Wicked"

Psalm 129. The ideas which enter our heads in youth have more or less influence on our later life. Some of these ideas are anti-religious, or such as "hate Zion." They act as binders, placing a restraint on our freedom. They are the cords of the wicked, pestiferous ideas, like grass on the housetop. By the mercy of the Lord the cords are cut, and the grass withered "before it groweth up." (A. 10303, R. 401, E. 507, P. 296.)

De Profundis

Psalm 130. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. . . . My soul waiteth for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning." Our trials are sometimes very acute and long drawn out. It is well with us, however, if we see the cause, the evil within, and watch ardently for the dawn—the Lord's coming. "He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

"O LORD, My Heart Is Not Haughty"

Psalm 131. It is easy to say this; it is difficult to mean it. We rid ourselves of haughtiness only as we realise how little we know, and how dependent we are in every way upon the Lord. Our soul is like that of a weaned child when we have become "innocent from the great transgression,"—presumptuousness. "O Israel, hope in the LORD from henceforth and forever."

"The LORD Hath Chosen Zion for His Habitation"

Psalm 132. Within every spiritual conflict we should have the inextinguishable desire of making our souls the dwelling place of the Lord. The temple was not built in time of war, but in time of peace. (1 Ki. 5:3.) We find the Lord "both in the spiritual and also in the natural sense of his Word." (Ephratah and the fields of the wood.) (E. 684.) We worship Him as thought and deed conform to the law of love. The throne of David shall never lack a child to sit on it. We can know what is right, and do it, by the love of God. "The LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. . . . There will I make the horn of David to bud. . . . His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

"The Blessing: Life for Evermore"

Psalm 133. Unity through mutual love, permeating our purposes, our reasoning and our thoughts about the most trivial matters in life is imaged in "the dew of Hermon"—the mount of the transfiguration—"descending upon the mountains of Zion." "The truth of good is from heaven upon those who are in the church, in which is salvation."

Worship by Night

Psalm 134. Sometimes we are quite unable to see light, or see our duty, or know why evil is permitted. It is well that we then maintain the effort to trust in the Lord. "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD."

"For I Know That the LORD Is Great"

Psalm 135. He made heaven and earth. He led his children out of Egypt, and restored unto them their heritage. To worship mammon is vanity. Trust in the Lord, and bless his Name for ever.

"His Mercy Endureth for Ever"

Psalm 136. His lovingkindness is present in every least incident in our lives, constantly leading us unto Himself. There is great power in repetition, or in adding point by point to the evidences of his mercy in turning our thoughts from ourselves to others with a desire to bless them, and in changing our conduct to do as we say.

"How Sing the LORD'S Song in a Foreign Land?"

Psalm 137. "By the rivers of Babylon we wept when we remembered Zion." Self-will holds us tightly in its grip, and we know it, and are humiliated. It is satire to require mirth of us, or a song of praise. Then is the time to remember the teachings of our religion, and find our chief joy in applying them to the situation. Edom brought a curse upon himself by rejoicing in the day of the fall of Jerusalem. We acquit ourselves honorably by using the willpower to have our own way to destroy the creature of our own selfishness, while yet it is in its infancy, and that too "in the Name of the Lord," the rock on which He builds his church. "Agree with thine adversary quickly."

"Thy Right Hand Will Save Me"

Psalm 138. Words could not be more plain. We are saved by the power of love. The song is uplifting. "I will give thee thanks with my whole heart. . . . for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth. . . . In the day that I called thou answeredst me. Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me Thy lovingkindness endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands."

The Lord's Presence in Man

Psalm 139. His omniscience (vv. 1-6), His omnipresence (vv. 7-12), His omnipotence (vv. 13, 14), His Divine Providence (vv. 15- 18), His enemies (vv. 19-22), and our prayer for deliverance from them (vv. 23, 24). "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of an idol (or cause of grief) in me, and lead me in the way everlasting "-the way in which there is no death. (John 5:24.)

"Deliver Me, O LORD, from the Evil Man"

Psalm 140. The evil man and the violent man, who devise mischiefs in their heart, and make war, exist in everyone who thinks evil, and violates the truths of the Word in self-justifications. The temptation-when the evil is called in question-is grievous. Evil is deceptive, treacherous and subtle, like a serpent, or adder's poison under their lips. An analysis of evil thoughts in the heart in time uncovers the falsification of the truth, the pride of argumentation, or winning our case, and the love of self. "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. The Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the needy."

"Let My Prayer Be Set Forth before Thee as Incense"

Psalm 141. Confessions and prayers from the heart ascend gratefully to the throne of God like the fragrant smoke of incense; and the uplifted hands imply the commitment of our lives to the Lord's care, which is also the meaning of the sacrificial lamb. (E. 325.) The song is a prayer to keep free from evil, and live in the confidence that evil thoughts and intentions harm those who harbor them. "Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape."

"Bring My Soul Out of Prison"

Psalm 142. Again, "I cry with my voice unto the LORD." We are in sore straits. The enemy has privily laid a snare for us. We seem to be forsaken. "There was no man that would know me: refuge failed me: no man cared for my soul." We look to the Lord as our refuge to deliver us from our persecutors, and bring our souls out of prison that we may praise his name. The prison is the same as the captivity. We are not free, but helplessly in the grip of evil. Our cry, however, is not left unanswered. "The righteous shall compass me about: for thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

"Cause Me to Hear Thy Lovingkindness in the Morning"

Psalm 143. The burden of sin still hangs heavily upon us. The enemy again is persecuting the soul. "He hath made me to dwell in darkness,. as those that have been long dead." We are overwhelmed by false thoughts that create the false impression that we do not belong here. We feel desolate and depressed. Then we reflect on God's works, and thirst for God, lest we sink hopelessly into lower depths. As the earth turns to the sun at peep of day, so the soul in turning to the Lord begins to see in the light the Lord's lovingkindness, and the way out of our trials. "Of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant."

"Happy Is That People, Whose God Is the LORD"

Psalm 144. Blessed be the LORD my rock, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." How sorely we stand in need of this training in discipline, and in the art of war. For, he who believes any evil to be allowable, and is withheld from doing it only by external restraints, or fear, is in hell for the time being, although he may imagine that he is then in heaven. Unless he can see that his feelings in which he delights are sinful, he leads himself more deeply into evils, or into hell. (P. 296.) Liberty is not a gift. We have to fight to regain our freedom, fight for every inch of ground on which the sole of our foot may stand, under the leadership of our Great High Captain, the Lord of Hosts. We may lose many a battle, but end in victory when we have learned to fight putting our trust in the Lord.

"I Will Extol Thee, My God, O King, for Ever"

Psalm 145. From its opening words this song clearly glorifies the Wisdom of God as the ruling power in the universe. But, without the latent power in gasoline, there would be no automobile. Without the hidden power that perpetually supplies the heat in the sun there would be no light there, no sun, no universe. In other words Love Itself is THE ABSOLUTE from which, and in which, everything is. "God is Love." Therefore, Wisdom extols love. The rest of this Psalm glorifies the LORD. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. . . . My mouth shall speak of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever." (vv. 3-21.) In response to this inspiring invitation there follow the next five Hymns of Praise which close the Psalter. Each of these songs begins and ends with the word "Hallelujah," and no trace of evil or sorrow is to be found in any one of them.

"Praise Ye the LORD, O My Soul"

Psalm 146. The Lord is our Helper, and none other. He made all things, and keepeth truth for ever. He executeth judgment for the oppressed, looseth the prisoners, openeth the eyes of the blind, doeth good to everyone in need: but the way of the wicked He turneth upside down. "The LORD shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion, to all generations. Hallelujah."

"The LORD Doth Build up Jerusalem"

Psalm 147. "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." The building of the church, and the return of the lost sheep of Israel, means a new civilisation, a real cooperative commonwealth with a world parliament. That is the fruit of the teachings of the church-real religion. "Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates (to keep out evil); he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders. . . . He sheweth his word unto Jacob (for the civil life), his statutes and his judgments unto Israel" (for the spiritual life). None know these judgments but they who seek to know and obey them. Hallelujah.

Gloria in Excelsis

Psalm 148. "Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise him sun, moon and stars; the waters above the heavens; earth, dragons and deeps; . . . for, his name alone is excellent." The meaning of the imagery contacts the life latent in the Word. Praise the Lord in the love of God, the love of the neighbor; the knowledge of spiritual life, and the knowledge of everything in human nature, or the world at large; the pleasures of life, and everything that conduces to the lasting happiness of mankind. "Man does not rejoice from himself, but from the goods and truths which are in him; these are the things which rejoice, because they are the causes of man's rejoicing." (E. 405.) And these are the Lord's. Hallelujah.

"Sing unto the LORD a New Song"

Psalm 149. The "saints" or angels, are holy only from that which they have from the Lord. "Let Israel rejoice, . . . for the LORD will beautify the meek with salvation." Character takes on "the beauty of holiness" through the acceptance of correction without resentment. "Let the saints exult in glory. . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute upon their kings and nobles (every false principle), the judgment written" in the Book of Life. "This honor have all his saints. Hallelujah."

The Great Amen

Psalm 150. "The Lord ought to be worshipped from every affection of good and truth because He is omnipotent." We agree to it without any reservation. Yet, how much do our words mean? just what our individual lives proclaim. Wherever the love of God has been received in the heart, the quality of it defined in terms of His Word, and expressed in a life that is finally free from any taint of evil, there the Lord finds the praise of man in acknowledgment of his omnipotence. Man, with infinite variation, is himself the instrument which resounds the praise of his Maker. (E. 326.) The Lord gives of Himself to bless His own without stint. And man fulfills his destiny as he gives in good measure and running over in the same spirit in which he receives it from the hand of God. "Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Hallelujah."

The Gospels

The Redemption

The Gospels furnish a fourfold testimony to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is stronger evidence of the fact of Christ than is accorded to the great majority of events in ancient history. Each Gospel presents the life from a different point of view. The Gospel of St. Matthew was written for the Jews, and presents the Lord as the Messiah, fulfilling "the law and the prophets" to the last "jot or tittle." St. Mark's Gospel, confined to the public ministry of the Lord, was composed "under the eye and direction of St. Peter" for the Romans, and depicts Jesus as "Lord of all," the Universal Ruler of the world. (Acts 10:34). St. Luke's Gospel for the Hellenic world describes the Lord as the Savior of all Mankind. And St. John's Gospel, addressed to the church, portrays the Lord as The Word Incarnate, the Son of God. The four connect the life respectively with the past, the present, the future and eternity, the complete picture of Him "who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty." Strictly speaking, there are no synonyms in any language. No two words have exactly the same meaning. So too, there are no vain repetitions in the Gospels. The variations in form and context of each repetition, especially when regarded in a series, adds indefinitely to the concept of the Perfect Life, and proves the supervision of the Holy Spirit in the Composition of the narrative. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26.)

St. Matthew

The Fulfilment of Prophecy

Chapter 1. The connecting link of the Old Testament and the New Testament is forged in the threefold "generation of Jesus Christ," who, "for our salvation did come into the world and take upon Him our nature," with its latent hereditary tendencies to good and to evil. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Our first inclination is to deny it. "Joseph was minded to put Mary away privily." The claim of a supernatural birth has been made for the Buddha, Augustus Caesar. and others. The difference in the Lord's case, however, places it altogether beyond comparison. "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." He is "God with us." The acknowledgment of God in Christ, with an implication unique in all time and for all time, is fundamental to the salvation of the human race. "Joseph took unto him his wife."

2. Immediately this acknowledgment raises the question of its adequacy to bring order into a world ruled by self-interest, (Herod). The church asserts that wheresoever the Christ-child has entered a heart ready to give up everything for his sake, (Bethlehem), there is to be found the truth that will rectify every injustice which destroys the peace of the world. Self-interest challenges the validity of this conviction, and endeavors to crush it stealthily while in the bud. But the light of life leads those who are searching for the truth to the feet of the infant King, to rejoice in the perception of the good of his unselfish love of man, (gold), as an answer to their prayer, (frankincense), and an undying memorial to Him, (myrrh). This is the spirit of Christmas. Our concept of Christianity grows with a new knowledge of the Word, (Egypt), even while the world welters in the slaughter of the innocents. We deplore the wreckage of churches in the past through the violation of the spirit of charity (Rachel weeping for her children). History, however, only strengthens our faith, and prepares us to meet the enemy, not as yet at its source, (in Judea), but in private life (Galilee), in seclusion (Nazareth). The greater part of our life is passed in God's sight, not man's sight.

3. The world is like a hopeless wilderness to us as soon as we try to make crooked ways straight for the spread of Christianity. The voice of conscience rudely disregards our feelings, and requires us to quit double-dealing. The good we do must be free from corruption. Reformation precedes regeneration in point of time. In point of importance, however, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire is first. The Lord Himself observed the same order. To fulfil all righteousness John baptized Jesus in the river Jordan.

4. Then followed the temptations in the spirit. The forty days fasting are significant of the temptations of a lifetime. The three temptations are types of all temptations. To make stones bread is to substitute learning for practical living. To cast self down from the giddy height is to lose one's head in seeking preeminence over all men. And to gain the whole world is to lose the soul in the worship of mammon. The words of the law that in each case repel the tempter are of universal application: the practical content in the mind and heart on each occasion is the secret of the power in the Word. Through growth in godliness light shines forth from character, impelling repentance, and giving a healthy impetus to the business of living-the Christian life. Obedience in proof of faith (Simon Peter), manliness (Andrew), charity and love (James and John), are chosen principles for restoring sanity to a world gone mad with the lust for money and power.

5. From heights scaled through humiliation, we learn the Lord's own standard of life. Lasting happiness springs from humility, from sorrow for the state of the world, courage to withstand correction, eagerness to know God's will, compassion, purity of heart, peacemaking, and patience under trial. The preservation of order in the world is dependent upon confidence based on the reception of these blessings. Without the Christian life the world must sink into darkness. Christianity comprises the fulfilment of "the law and the prophets," freed from self-righteousness. Anger, or contempt of the intelligence, or of the character, of others violates the law on a descending scale. We bring corresponding punishment upon ourselves, unless and until we set our feelings right for sure. Lust is essential adultery. We are in hell if sight or touch are permitted to enjoy the feeling of lust longer than it takes to perform a surgical operation -- or cut it out. It is frequently difficult to distinguish love from lust. When sure that the feelings are lustful, the sooner we get rid of them the better. The perception of the truth by a good heart is a safer guide than the confirmation of wishful thinking by the spirit of the Word, or its letter, or the doctrine of the church, or human reason. When the truth hits us we should be on guard against resentment, in an attempt to disprove it, and escape condemnation. Debate within, or without, hardens the heart, and warps the judgment. Better concede that we may be in the wrong, and give up pleas in self-defence as far as is possible. This applies especially when concessions are necessary where dislike, or enmity, lurks within the heart. Our love is often put to a sore test when under the criticism or persecution of others.

6. Self-merit is no honor. We lower our dignity when sounding our own trumpet, or reflecting upon our own goodness. And prayer for show, or empty of meaning, is weak and hypocritical. Pray to Him who made all, and provides for and protects all alike as his own. Pray that we bring no stigma upon the Christian name we bear, that His law may be made clear to us, and that His will as held in conscience may be upheld in action. In the endeavor to live anew pray for strength from above, for forgiveness, and for deliverance from evil when tempted. Self-pity is debasing. It helps, and it means much, to be cheerful and hopeful, even while the heart is heavy with sorrow. The treasures of wisdom are the only treasures worth possessing. But, an evil eye blinds us to the value of wisdom, and mammon is a lord that leads his servants into evil. And, why worry about the future? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and everything needful to your highest interests will be provided.

7. We do wrong in condemning people, or their motives. We may justly condemn their opinions, or beliefs, or conduct. But, we can never see clearly how to help them, until we have freed ourselves from contempt, or jealousy, or partisanship, (the beam in our own eye). Hateful criticism, however true, is nothing short of profanity, destructive of our own character, (casting pearls before swine, that turn again and rend us). Opportunities for service open before us whenever the heart and head unite to give our best wherever it is needed. (Ask, seek, knock.) Acquire the habit of considering others as much as self, and fix no limit to the service, in a Christian spirit in every word and deed. The fulfilment of the spirit of "the law and the prophets" presents a task worthy of man, the noblest work of God. Our opportunity lies in avoiding the line of least resistance—self-will—and entering life by the strait gate and narrow way. Many a time false thinking will appear in the garb of disinterested love. By their fruits ye shall know them, if the heart is open to conviction. They are not distinguishable to the closed heart. "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Character must be built on the living acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ, put to the severest test, and not found wanting. The authority in the truth in the Sermon on the mount is felt by the hearer who is convinced that the Speaker did what He said, and is not asking the impossible of any man.

8. The Lord descended to the plain to prove it. The cleansing of the leper implies that the Lord cleared his conscience of every thought of self-merit. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. (John 7:16.) The Lord then turns his attention to the belief that bad habits indulged from childhood (the palsied servant) are

incurable. We are familiar with the fact, however, that we have acquired the power of controlling these same habits whenever it would hurt our interests or reputation to expose them. The Roman centurion had soldiers trained to obey him, and therefore knew that the Lord had only to say the word, and his servant would be healed. With the Lord's help a true conscience can control bad habits just as easily as a false or spurious conscience. This practical lesson comes as a rebuke to the old church in faith alone. (Peter's wife's mother.) The fever is allayed by the touch of the hand of the Master. Excitement in the multitude causes the Lord to withdraw to the other side of the lake. A professed desire to follow Him uncovers a love of deceit and pernicious thoughts that preclude the acceptance of the Gospel. Discipleship requires the complete renunciation of the old adam in us. "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." The attempt to do so arouses violent opposition, affording the opportunity for another demonstration of the power of his word in restoring our peace of mind. A main cause of trouble, the spirit of greed, grows incorrigible through long indulgence. The devils cast into the swine that perished in the sea again illustrate the power of the word to eject greed, and grant generosity in its place. Resistance on one occasion does not eradicate the evil altogether. "The whole city besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts."

9. On returning to his own city another case of palsy was brought to Him on a bed for cure. The confirmation of sin is often responsible for our inability to do a kindness, or even feel kindly, to another. And so He says: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," which sounds like blasphemy to many. The recognition of Jesus as God comes with the restoration of health. This is fittingly followed by the addition of Matthew, "the gift of God," to his chosen followers. The outstanding characteristic of his Gospel too is the fulfilment of prophecy in the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. Christianity exists to put mercy before creed or ritual, and "to call sinners to repentance." Repentance is a time of abstinence and self-denial. When the Lord is present there is good cheer even in tribulation. Only when the bridegroom is taken from us are we unhappy. New cloth is not used to fill a rent in an old garment, or new wine put into old bottles. The Lord teaches the world a new spirit in meeting trouble. Put the new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. Two sorrows that are healed illustrate the point. "They whom God enlightens" (Jairus) seek relief from pessimism-the love of living in the dark, or grieving without hope, (the sick daughter). The life's blood of an unknown woman had been wasted twelve years. The touch of the hem of the Lord's garment gave instant relief. He knew that virtue had gone out of Him, reacting to the return of life to Jairus's twelve year old daughter. This is a remarkable testimony to the power of the letter of God's Word to illuminate the mind, transmute wasted energy in grieving into a living faith in the Lord, and resuscitate within the church a sympathy for everyone in trouble that impels action to succor and to save. Sympathy opens the eyes to see the needful thing to do, and the mouth to speak the word of life, (two blind men and one dumb man cured). The charge of hypocrisy in the work is often heard. But the evidences of new life and new joy are so marked, that they rise above criticism. The more we do to uplift society, the more we feel the Lord's compassion for the masses "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Sympathy and understanding are at a high premium today. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

10. The laborers are sent forth with power to heal, as the Lord healed. The twelve represent all the elements necessary to establish Christianity on the earth. Simon Peter heads the first four, Philip the second four, and James the third four in all three Gospels. All three lists end with the name of Judas Iscariot. The three quartets represent the leading elements in the will, the understanding and the life of each Christian, or in the Christian Church. Christianity does not appeal to those who are in the love of self (Gentiles and Samaritans), but to all who feel the sorrows of the world as their own, and desire to do something about it, under guidance and help from above. These are "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," in captivity to reasoning excusatory of self-indulgence. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Emancipation for better living is within the reach of everyone. Proof in a healthy outlook, sincerity of purpose, newness of life, and freedom from vice or evil is the only guarantee of the meaning and power of the appeal. As we have received, so shall we give, without thought of reward. Our "meat" is in sharing others' gains. In our public and private life the Lord expects us to greet one and all alike with peace and goodwill. If our salutation is unwelcome, ours is not to condemn, or resent, but to be sure that whatever evil we behold without does not in any degree adhere to ourselves. "Shake off the dust of your feet." We sink to a lower level if we do unto others what we would not have them do unto us, or anyone else. It is hard to preserve the good life intact from a world charged with rapacity and excess. What to think and what to do when confronting conflicting interests, tests our faith. The Holy Spirit prompts the word through conscience with increasing clearness the more we submit our wills to God's will. The foes of our own household are our main concern. Everything must be brought into the light for judgment. The Lord's Providence extends even to the least important thoughts. Our worth is measured by the weight of the burden we are prepared to carry, and the sacrifice of the self-life made in the interest of Christianity. The reward? There is a real joy in learning about the life of the Lord in the Word. It brings US into touch with Him and the infinite love of God in heaven. There's a joy in receiving the truth, or the good of life, each for its own sake (a righteous man). And there is a joy even in dropping a comforting remark to anyone in trouble, for whatever it may be worth, (a cup of cold water for a little one).

11. The report of the Lord's life did not meet John's expectation. The Lord, however, confirmed the report to John's disciples, and added: "Blessed is he whosoever shall find no stumbling block in me." This answer is no reflection on John's work. The corrective teaching of the letter of the Word, which John represents, can not be twisted to prove right wrong, and wrong right, at will, like a reed shaken by the wind. It may be rough, like John's clothing, or his hard words, compared with the inner meaning—the doctrine of charity, or love. The love of evil must first be removed from the heart that the love of God may enter in. Mother church has no greater message to deliver than the call for repentance. At the same time the right motive—the love of God is more important than the form of repentance. Men are tempted to set the world straight, and establish heaven on earth by force. This is a terrible violation of the childlike spirit of trust in God, which can grow only in a free interchange of higher values in life by self-renunciation. Children pipe in the mart for a dance and for mourning, but their fellows will have none of it. And so, to this generation self-denial and Christian living, (John's fasting and the Lord's feasting), make life worthless for it. In truth, the sorrows which attended the transgressions of God's laws in past ages bear no comparison with the sufferings inseparable from the abuse of the light of life today. Thank God, the offenders know not what they do. No man in Christendom knoweth the love of God except him who finds it in following the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The way of the Cross" concealed within the Scriptures is unveiled to the humble, (that is, to babes), "who love truths because they are truths, and make them of use for life," (S. 57), and who recognize and welcome the voice of the Lord when He says to the tired and disconsolate: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

12. Trust in the Lord is the peace of the Sabbath, after days of labor. To meditate upon the Word, and take home a lesson from it, (plucking the ears of corn and eating thereof), is in complete harmony with the spirit of that day. We despise any lesson of life when we make more of ritual than of practice,—more of the letter of the law than of the spirit. The power to do good may have dried up by merely talking about it (the withered hand), but can be restored at will. The nations could stop fighting today, if they so desired with their whole hearts. They prefer war, which is destructive of Christianity. Yet Christianity is not dead. There are many who have experienced its healing power, and silently bide the time when men will be more open to the conviction of the futility of sin in any form. The Lord never forces any man possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, to see and confess this truth, until he is ready to stand by it for good. The

love of hypocrisy tries to break down the defence. But the proof that the love of Christ integrates, and anti-Christ disintegrates, society is unanswerable. Hypocrisy is hard to break down even in the best of men. It is forgivable when unrecognized, but damnable when consciously allowed to pass without judgment. Our words ring true when consciously sincere, and false when meant to conceal duplicity. An expose of the follies of hypocrisy is made apparent by the wisdom of sincerity in the Lord's life in fulfilment of prophecy. He entered into the heart of all the knowledges and the wisdom of the race that condemned his generation, and rose from the dead in majestic obedience to it. The more anyone seeks to clear a guilty conscience of offence, the deeper he plunges himself into trouble. Our simple duty is to "do the will of the Father which is in heaven," to be a lover of the living church of God, and neighborly to everyone, (my mother and my brethren).

13. "The same day." The Lord proceeded forthwith to teach a waiting throng about his kingdom as a kingdom of uses. First, the growth of the knowledge of practical living. To the irresponsible the practical teachings of God's Word never take root. The superficial take them to heart with the best intentions, but, as soon as they meet opposition, their enthusiasm wanes, and the useful ideas fade out of existence. The worldly-minded gladly accept practical Christianity, but check its full fruitage as prejudicial to their success in life, or as bad policy. It takes patience and courage to overcome indifference, self-love and worldliness, and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. The disciple sees the meaning, and is protected from profanation by the Spirit of the Lord. The explanation in terms of life is the Lord's work. Without Him we can do nothing. Secondly, the growth of our knowledge of the distinction between true and false ideas. It is in the heading out of wheat and tares that the difference appears. Wheat yields white and wholesome grains, while darnel produces black and poisonous seeds. Thirdly, the growth of our knowledge of faith. The mustard seed is "the least of all seeds," and pungent to the taste. A humble warm-hearted faith grows normally, and in time harbors many a helpful and useful thought. Fourthly, the growth of temptations. This subject is closely connected with the separation of that which is true from that which is false. Hence, the Lord's explanation at this point of the parable of the tares and the wheat. Leaven produces fermentation, which is a recognisable symbol of trials that free us from conceit, or self-righteousness, (the starch consumed by fermentation. Deut. 10:16). Fifthly, the growth of the treasures of wisdom. These are hidden within the day's doings, and become our own through self-renunciation in perfecting our lives in our "field of honor." Sixthly, the growth of the knowledge of the Lord as our Savior. The oyster covers a foreign particle that has invaded its home with coatings of nacre to remove the irritation. A knowledge of the Lord's saving grace frees us from the vexation of evil within, as we make the effort to overcome it. Each gate of the Holy City was of one pearl. And seventhly, the growth of the separation of knowledges in the memory that have life in them. We have good reason for cherishing fond memories of the past, but reason, (the net), may help us to learn yet more from unhappy recollections before casting them aside for good. What treasures of things new and old! Yet, human nature balks over the admission of the Divinity of the Lord who owns and dispenses them. Faith wanes: character-building is suspended.

14. "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus," and John was in prison. We may be analysing a common situation where group pressure constrains us to do things contrary to conscience. Christianity forces the issue—conscience or self-interest? Self-interest sometimes wins, and conscience is silenced; but, not for ever. John's disciples buried the body, and went and told Jesus. He withdrew to a desert place beyond Jordan apart. The multitude followed, and He healed and fed them out of compassion, and then went into a mountain to pray. A storm arose, and threatened the safety of the ship on the lake. With the dawn of a new day the Lord came walking on the water, and saved the disciples, Peter in particular. The strengthening of the inner life revives faith in the conflict with the foes within.

15. The issue of obedience to the law, or to man, follows. Failure to wash the hands before eating harms no one. But, failure to help parents in want, and resort to subterfuge to evade conviction, stultifies the law altogether. To be offended by just criticism makes matter worse. The blind fall into a ditch,—that is, hell,—and take their followers with them. Obstinacy regards proffered help as an affront. Clearly, the most wicked thoughts that enter our minds are perfectly harmless, so long as we do not entertain them. As soon, however, as we cherish, or nurse them, they defile character. And who is entirely free from this love of evil thinking, which is represented by the daughter of a Canaanite woman grievously vexed with a devil. We cannot always get rid of ugly thoughts when we so desire. We do not know how ugly they are. The Lord cannot rectify the effect of our habit, until our pride as the elect has been humbled. The woman's admission of the Gentiles—"dogs" in the eyes of the Jew—being content "to eat the crumbs which fell from their masters' table," brought to light a faith that worked, and prepared the way for the cure of many other evils, and for further instruction in the spiritual life.

16. Returning to the land the Pharisees ask for a sign from heaven. Why? They recognize the signs of the weather in the sky! But, they fail to see why nations and churches have risen and fallen, have come and gone! They ought to know these signs of the times without being told. The proof of the Lord's Messiahship rests upon his testimony to the truth in his life, his death and his resurrection. Despite the hostility and obstruction of a wicked and adulterous generation, He is "the Light of the world" to lead the unsophisticated Gentile through repentance out of the darkness into the light. That is the meaning of the sign of the prophet Jonas. The disciples failed to see it, and doubted his word. They were affected by the leaven of the Pharisees, although they had witnessed his power to feed the thousands. There was good reason why they should "beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The world may think of Jesus as a great prophet, but to the disciples He is more than that,—even "the Christ, the Son of the living God." That is beyond the comprehension of the hypocrite or the materialist. Christianity will be built on the living acknowledgment of the Lord, which is invincible. That acknowledgment opens heaven, to accept or reject good or evil at will. The potency of this belief, however, is dependent upon its freedom from vain boasting. We have our part to do. But the power to do even that is from the Lord. He told his disciples the sufferings that lay before Him to enter into his glory, but they could not grasp it. The self-life must be separated from the life from God. We are judged by our works, and not by our faith. The experience even in part amply testifies to the coming of the Lord.

17. "After six days"—after a completed period of temptations dawns the blessed day of rest. The glory of the Lord may be seen by anyone whose love, and faith and Christian life have opened his eyes to the perfection of the Lord's character as revealed in "the law and the prophets." (Moses and Elias.) How satisfying it is to live in the contemplation of the Divine! Our indisposition to return to real life again is removed by the touch and presence of "Jesus only." The meaning of the vision is not clear until the letter of the Word has yielded a spiritual lesson reduced to simple terms in practical life,—the equivalent of the resurrection of the Son of man. Many, however, repudiate the claim of conscience (John), and become fanatics. The disorder is curable through faith, and prayer, and action in abstaining from a passionate adherence to distorted views of life and religion. The evil in these abnormal mental states must be driven out. Otherwise, the evil will oust the Christian ideal. The Lord rose from the dead, submitting to the powers that be in this world in his crucifixion. The tribute paid to Rome then was of the flesh alone.. and not of the spirit. The fish provided the tribute money for the Lord, and for Peter. Mortal suffering is inseparable from a victorious faith.

18. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven is he who has attained the innocence of wisdom, freedom from sin through following the Lord's example. The humility of a child opens the heart to the reception of the Lord. We see wherein we have been false to Him. To offend against "one of these little ones which believe in me" deliberately is most debasing. Offences are unavoidable, and woe inevitable, but, every misdeed or misunderstanding presents an opportunity to redeem character. It is better to pass through life incapacitated by suffering in self-denial, than to be wrong, and feel satisfied to remain in hell. The salvation of everyone is dependent upon the states of innocence imprinted in the soul in childhood. From these conscience is built up, and within these "heaven is at hand." "It is not the will of the Father in heaven, that one of these little one should perish." When, therefore, we are at variance with our brother, we should analyze our feelings. Our duty is to forgive those who trespass against us, that we may experience God's forgiveness. If we see where we are at fault, and adjust our feelings rightly, charity will reign within. If not, examine the circumstances in the light of reason, and the teachings of the church. If after this, no fault appears at our door, then we may treat an offender as an outsider, but without prejudice or resentment. As are our judgments for good, and against evil, so is heaven formed within. Anything about which both the mind and will agree to is possible. And when put in practice-the third witness-the Lord is in the midst of it. The Lord places no limit upon the exercise of forgiveness. The Lord Himself forgives to the uttermost. Yet, we often hold others indebted to us in durance vile without compassion to do whatever we require of them. The lex talionis operates automatically in imprisoning ourselves, so that the Lord cannot reach us, until the heart of stone has become a heart of flesh.

19. The Lord then went to "the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan." The problem of divorce belongs there, since it is a break in external relationships due to internal disagreement. Man is responsible for the break, which is only permitted to avert greater evils. Marriage for self-indulgence is legalized adultery. Some preserve the inborn purity of their vow by a perception of the fitness of things, others by mutual concessions, and others from a sense of duty. Marital happiness is conditioned upon the rejuvenation of the soul, the pure joys of childhood enriched by a mature understanding of their content. Ethical culture is not enough to attain life that can be called "eternal", and that comes only from God, who is pure love. The Lord specified the commandments on the second table as essential to happiness. The rich young man claimed to have fulfilled their requirements. Yes, but one thing is needful for perfection, a selfless attachment to wealth, or, to culture. That is the fulfilment of the first great commandment, and hard to attain. It takes a lifetime to detach the heart from its illusion of the almighty power of the dollar, or of knowledge. Whoever follows the Lord in the regeneration, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory," shall also sit upon a throne to set up a new order without as well as within himself.

20. "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder hiring laborers into his vineyard." Those who are most attached to wealth, material or spiritual, are hired first. Those less attached to it have less of the heat of the day's work to endure. Those hired at the eleventh hour have little or no attachment to overcome. The reward of each is but a penny. "All service ranks alike with God, whose puppets best and worst are we." (R. Browning.) All of which is a fitting introduction to the last journey to Jerusalem, with the cross already in sight. To the disciples, the vision of world-dominion is uppermost. Who shall be greatest in the kingdom to come on which they have staked their all? Contrary to their expectation he will be chief who subordinates his own interests to the interests of others, "even as the Son of man came to give his life (the self-life) a ransom for many." Two blind men receive their sight at their own request. The Lord opens our understanding and perception to this new and higher order of things, if and when we so desire.

21. The Lord then asks us to place our reason under his direction. It is not free to prove right to be right, when it has long grown accustomed to prove wrong to be right. The ass is tied. The two disciples are told to loose it, and bring it to the Lord. He hath need of it. Language that clothes our thoughts is like the garments that clothe the body. And so we bring our troubles to the Lord for judgment. The people put their garments on the ass, spread them in the way, and cried, saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Lord entered Jerusalem as its king, and cleansed the temple, his dwelling place with man. He cleansed his own Humanity of the spirit of gain, to the perfected praise of babes and sucklings—"the lamb of God" made ready for sacrifice,—his last trials. On the morrow the condemnation of the fig tree represented the self-inflicted judgment on the Jewish Church for lack of charity. The Lord asserted that this condition is not unalterable, as is generally supposed. Whoever asks in prayer, believing, shall receive. His authority for doing what He did is beyond the understanding of the self-righteous who have nothing to be sorry for. The despised publican and harlot enter heaven, his kingdom, having responded to the appeal of John, his forerunner. The householder in the next parable is the Father. The vineyard is the church as a centre for the cultivation of neighborliness. The prophets were sent continually to receive of the fruits, only to be rejected and killed. And when the Son and heir appeared, they treated him likewise, and seized the inheritance. From their own lips their conduct proved their unworthiness of the trust committed to them. The headstone of the corner is the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as our God and Savior. The builders of the temple rejected it. To know what Christianity teaches, and refuse to have anything to do with it, hurts one's own character; but, to acknowledge it in Christian living, and then go back on it, and emasculate it, completely destroys character. Many an honest Christian may feel the test put upon him so great at times that he is tempted to renounce his faith, but hesitates through fear of the loss of reputation. Such an unworthy motive comes to the surface only to be condemned.

22. The first of this group of parables (c. 21:28-32) shows the weak spot in the will to believe; the second, (c. 21:33-46), exposes the effect of rejecting the means of salvation, the Son of man; and the third, the failure to wed the will to the ideal in Christian living, by sharing the new life with the Giver and his guests at "the marriage supper of the Lamb." The selected guests declined. Their reason? Business as usual! The gentiles responded, and among them a guest without a wedding garment. This is the gift of heaven to all the Lamb's followers. (Rev. 19:8.) Many, however, expect to share the joy of heaven without making any sacrifice for it. This belief binds hand and foot in the service of self, and leads to total darkness. The self-righteous question the justice of it. The nation is in bondage to Rome. Does the Lord approve of it? The silence that followed his dictum meant consent to law enforcement as the lesser of two evils, even though it were only for self-preservation. Question: Is it possible to obey the law? Marriage for self-advantage is no marriage. It is therefore barren, and ends in death. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The ability to obey the law, and rise from the dead, is the inalienable possession of every man. Question: Which law? The two great commandments are absolute spiritual values, which are inviolable. The Lord's question: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" Admittedly "the son of David. How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" The answer demands more than a lip confession of His Divinity.

23. Therefore, the Lord continues: The scribes and Pharisees give good advice. Follow that; but not their example, for they accept no responsibility for the burdens they place on other men's shoulders. They live for the praise of men. They advertise their own probity. They seek preeminence and distinction. Christians are all brethren, feeling less and less worthy of recognition, the more they are privileged to do for others. X ray pictures of hypocrisy disclose malignant conditions beneath the surface that need great courage to eradicate. Everything is in the open in the light of heaven. The hypocrite tries to conceal the corruption

within; or, if called in question, justify it. Whited sepulchres! Outwardly respectable members of society, but inwardly self-righteous, self-centred and self-willed! God's chosen people! They build monuments in honor of the great prophets, whom they rejected and killed to the last One of them. "Behold your house, (the temple in Jerusalem), is left desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." History repeats itself, but only that we may thank the Lord for the light, and the opportunity to rewrite it.

24. He left the temple, The church had rejected its Lord and its God. Every truth for the building of character had been perverted. This desolation of the church would be repeated in Christianity prior to the Lord's Second Coming. As soon as "the first love" of the Apostolic age cooled down the church was disrupted by bitter doctrinal controversies, "wars and rumors of wars." (vv. 4-7.) The second period of Christianity, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, was characterised by the denial of its principles in the life,—killing the disciples, and following false prophets. (vv. 8-14.) "The abomination of desolation," characteristic of the third period, found expression in the dogma of salvation by faith alone. (vv. 15-22.) And the last state of the church—naturalism, rationalism, materialism and atheism—appeared in the eighteenth century, when "false Christs" took the place of the Lord in the church, which then "called falsity truth, and evil good." (vv. 23-28, A. 3900.) It was hard to discover the love of God, faith in Him, or heavenly truths anywhere. Then appeared the sign of the Son of man in heaven, the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word of God. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Good people will see the meaning of the sign, and suffer for the sins of man that appear in the light of it. "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." That is the practical Second Coming—the truth in the Word with power to remove the cause of all sorrow and sighing in the world to the glory of God. The growth of charitable work in the last century reassures us of the dawn of a new and better age. Summer is nigh when the leaves of the fig tree appear. In the light of revelation the evil in the race today, the aftermath of the past degeneration, is brought before us for judgment. To each man comes the solemn warning, "Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

25. The three parables that follow specify the coming of the Son of man severally to the will, the understanding and the outward conduct. The Lord gives everyone an affection for the truth learned in childhood. This the ten virgins represent. Sometimes that truth is welcomed in a loving heart, and becomes a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." At other times it is unwelcome: we resented correction. Our lamp has gone out for lack of oil. The bridegroom comes, the five wise virgins go in with him to the marriage, and the five foolish ones find the door closed to them. So long as evil is cherished in the heart, we must suffer till the will to believe is strong enough to submit to a change of heart. Watch! The five talents represent the truths received in childhood, and the two talents the truths acquired in mature life. Their being doubled signifies the acquisition of love in putting them to service. The one talent represents truth without love,—truth used to condemn, and not to save. "I knew thee that thou art a hard man, and I hid thy talent in the earth." The harsh hypercritical spirit must be cast out of our nature, and the truth rendered serviceable under the gentle spirit of trustfulness in God. The talent is given to him that had ten talents, that nothing should be lost. Finally, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall separate his sheep from the goats." The works of "the sheep" were done "unto one of the least of these my brethren," while the works of "the goats," lacking that motive, condemned them to everlasting punishment. The Lord works perpetually to remove from the heart the spirit of self-righteousness and self-merit, and put guilelessness and trustfulness in their place in all the good we do. The Son of man thus affects His Coming to us in a changed will, a changed mind, and a changed life.

26. The stage is now set for the closing events of Passion week. The plot to take the Lord's life is brewing. He saw all clearly before and behind the scenes. Divine Love was needed to meet the trial with Wisdom adequate to the situation. The Scriptures supplied the need: the Wisdom in them opens to the eyes of love. This is signified by the woman anointing the Lord's head. The disciples considered the act wasteful. The worldly begrudge an unbounded display of love which they cannot understand. Judas must have felt thus when he estimated his Master's worth at a paltry thirty pieces of silver. The day of unleavened bread, (signifying "pure love") arrived. And when the even was come, Jesus sat down with the twelve, and informed them that one of them would betray Him. They partook of the supper, sang a hymn, and went out into the mount of Olives. From the mountain top they descended to the valley, where Jesus felt the agony of subjecting his will to the Divine Will in the ordeal before Him. At the betrayal, Judas told the armed throng to hold fast him whom he kissed, and then approached his Master, and kissed Him. The Greek word for the "sign" means a formal greeting, but another word for the act, means the kiss of love, by which Judas was born again. (v. 24.) The church condemned the Lord to death for claiming to be "the Christ, the Son of God." Cowardice shook the faith of the new church: Peter renounced his sworn confession of allegiance to the Lord. The cock crew, the Lord's words came to mind, and Peter was smitten with remorse.

27. The change at work in Judas was completed when he saw his Master was condemned. He expiated his crime by the complete surrender of his life into the hands of his Maker to be refashioned by Him as clay in the potter's hands. The blood money purchased the potter's field, in fulfilment of prophecy. (Isa. 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Zech. 11:12, 13; A. 3652.) And thus an enduring faith and self-sacrificing love provided a sure foundation for the Christian Church soon to take form. Jesus was brought before Pilate, accused of claiming to be "the king of the Jews,"—a rival of Caesar. Shall the law of love rule in the affairs of men, or a despotism? The depravity of the church and people is unbared in clamoring for the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion of the Lord. The state would accept no responsibility. Pilate washed his hands in innocency before the multitude. The cruel treatment of the Lord in mockery, and by insolent abuse and crucifixion showed the depths to which man can fall when crossed. Everything the Christ stood for was ignominiously rejected to the last scrap! They even parted his garments, and cast lots for his vesture. The scriptures meant nothing to them. They could only offer vinegar mingled with gall to quench his thirst for righteousness. "By the darkness over all the land was represented, that in the universal church there was nothing but evil, and the falsity thence derived." (E. 526.) He saw it all and felt the terrible loneliness and hopelessness of the situation, which gave poignancy to the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forgotten me?" By his death the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and "opened the way to His Divine itself through His Human made Divine." (A. 2576.) "The spirits in prison" were "liberated by the Lord, and introduced into heaven." (vv. 52, 53, A. 8018.) The nucleus for the formation of a new church on the earth also appeared. Joseph of Arimathea took from the cross the body of the Lord, wrapped it in clean linen, and laid it in a new tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary kept guard at the sealed entrance to prevent desecration, and the Roman soldiers were there to thwart deception. The church is the custodian of the Word, to preserve it from mutilation, until the fulness of time when Christianity has become a real power in the world.

28. To the selfish and worldly the Word is a closed book. But to loving hearts that feel the bitterness of life, power from above opens the Scriptures, that they may see the triumph of Love over death. Mother church will find the way of the cross in the daily walks in life, according to the instruction of the angel to the women, "Tell the disciples that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." On their way the women met the Lord Himself, and received from Him the very same instruction: "Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see me." The Word in its spirit and the Lord

Himself insist that He is only to be seen in the good life, in contradistinction to the false teachings of the former church that led to its dissolution, and still persist. Every true disciple of the Lord now turns to the evidences of new life in the world viewed from within, (the mountain in Galilee), for proofs of the Lord's resurrection in man today. Healthy doubts only strengthen the assurance that the Lord from His Divine Human is steadily bringing order out of chaos in the world, despite all appearances to the contrary. (A. 7931.) "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," make Christians of all well-disposed people, "teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always to the end of the age. Amen."

St. Mark

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Chapter 1. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Life is an eternal cycle. The regenerate life begins again with repentance in preparation for a new measure of Christian grace. We read again of the Lord's baptism. The sign disappears when the mind turns to its signification in cleansing the heart and mind from impure feelings and thoughts in penitence. Temptations are closely associated with this frequent experience. And so, after the Lord's baptism "the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there forty days, tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts, (falsities springing from lusts): and angels ministered unto him." An introduction to the Christian life calls into service again and again what we have already learned about obedience, brotherliness, charity and good works (the four disciples). The Gospel takes on a new meaning for us. The Lord taught with authority, and cast an unclean spirit out of a man in the synagogue. What new doctrine is this? And whence is the power to heal? These innovations stirred up heated opposition. Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. The Lord cured her. He also healed many others, including a leper, who was told to give thanks to God, but went straightway and blazed abroad the matter, thus limiting the Lord's work there.

2. And Jesus preached in a home in Capernaum. And they brought one sick of the palsy to be healed by Him. We may be completely apathetic toward someone who suffers for lack of our sympathy and help. The word of the Lord convicts us, but we cannot get near Him because of numberless selfish considerations that crowd the mind. We must rise above them. But how? With the help of friendly encouragement and advice we are brought to the feet of the Savior, and experience his forgiveness in our ability to be christian, where formerly we had been unchristian. We continue to learn more about the Gospel and its glad message, that gives added weight to the conviction that unquestioning obedience to the plain mandates of the law is frequently the only means of conjoining us with the Lord. (Levi at the receipt of custom.) And when we consider seriously the problem of crime and punishment, we wonder how far the gospel can be carried in reclaiming sinners. Are the respectable scribes and Pharisees any better than the despised publicans and sinners? Or worse? For both alike the Lord "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Fasting sometimes goes with repentance. It is like a garment, giving comfort in the hope of relief. The fasting of the Pharisees, however, is like an old garment with a rent in it. They fast to be seen of men, for self-pity, which gives no real comfort. The fasting of John's disciples is like a new garment, mourning blest with comfort in the Lord's sustaining presence. The new and the old rituals are altogether incongruous. So also old bottles burst from the fermentation of new wine. The old ideas of the scribes and Pharisees could never be stretched to contain the new spirit of sabbath observance which the Lord gave to it. And today we again require a new set of rules for keeping both the letter and the spirit of the law on that day. We do things on Sunday now that would have shocked our forefathers. Where is the wrong in dancing on Sunday, if any?

3. The great question is not so much the deed, as the spirit of it. But, how many have lost the power of doing things on Sunday due to early inhibitions. The Lord healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath to release power for well- doing on that day, and every other day. Anything calculated to enrich the life of others on Monday is equally suitable for Sunday, should occasion demand it. The issue brought the old and the new order into serious conflict, and a great manifestation of the power of the Lord to help sufferers of all kinds. So He ordained twelve to go forth and preach, and heal sicknesses, and cast out

devils. The twelve from Simon Peter to Judas Iscariot are linked together as one unit representing all the various elements that enter into the Christian life. The scribes accredited the Lord's work to Beelzebub. For Satan to rise up against himself, however, would end his kingdom. Neither was it from an unclean spirit that the Lord performed his works. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable. The Lord Jesus Christ held a unique place in the world. He disowned his earthly origin, and shifted all blood relationships on this plane of life to the higher plane of the spiritual life where He now reigns, one with the Father, and from whom is the Holy Spirit. "Whosoever wills to do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

4. Again, He returns to the affairs of this world, and tells the people what to do to put them in order. He is scattering the seed. Some pay little or no attention to what He says. Others are enthusiastic about its value, but only theoretically. Others use it to promote their worldly welfare. While others give ear to it, and make it profitable in better living. This practical meaning is hidden from the worldly wise, but made apparent in practice. The light of life, which comes in this way, enters into the hidden places in the heart for judgment. We are judged according to our light. In the very nature of things the seeds of truth will grow to the point of fruitage. As for a faith that starts in great humility—"the least of all seeds"—it may grow to proportions that shelter many profitable thoughts from the unfolding of the Lord's Word, which is all couched in the language of parable. "Without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples" for spiritual living. But how? The ship that carried the Lord and his disciples represents the Church, or religion, translating the theory into practical terms, which is often accompanied by a storm of protest and resentment. The Lord is asleep on a pillow at the stern. Unconsciously to us He is directing the processes of our thinking to the crisis when we feel helpless without his aid. His awakening calms our fears and opposition. Another kind of fear then takes possession of the disciple,—the dread of doing anything unworthy of One with such a command of human passions.

5. The disciples would presently witness his power over still more disorderly passions. The Gadarene demoniac represents the ungovernable love of possessions. The obsession is a leading cause of war,—hell let loose, and apparently quite beyond control. The expulsion of the legion into the herd of swine that perished in the lake gives an ocular proof of their return to the source whence they came. The Lord's Word is irresistible. The Lord awaits the time when the world will turn to Him as its only hope of controlling the demon let loose today. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The Lord and his disciples returned to the land to be met by Jairus whose twelve year old daughter lay at the point of death. A woman with an issue of blood of twelve years standing was healed on the way by touching the Lord's garment. The circulation of blood through the body to supply nutriment to it resembles the circulation of money, or knowledge, through the body politic for the support of everyone. The waste through the abuse of money and knowledge is patent to everyone. The church has a heavy responsibility for this condition, which is symptomatic of the mania for wealth. It is not enough to stop the waste in the spending. The "mania",—the type of insanity in each individual,—must die, and a new motive from the Lord take its place. This is involved in the death and resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers in the synagogue.

6. These miracles proclaim the Divinity of the Lord. "His own,"—that is, our amour propre,—raises doubts which curtail our receptivity of his loving-kindness "And he marvelled because of their unbelief," but proceeded to teach, and reinforce the means of overcoming prejudices and self-will. The twelve were sent forth in pairs with power over unclean spirits. The growth of Christianity proceeds slowly, and with difficulty. One great difficulty is a false conscience. We all do a lot of wishful thinking, which we regard as guidance from the Lord, even to the justification of a course of action that is adulterous. Herod beheads

John for accusing him of adultery. John's disciples bury the body. The Lord hears of it, and feeds the multitude in the desert. The disciples cross the lake by night in a storm. Jesus comes to them walking on the troubled waters. And when they landed in Canaan "straightway they knew him." The sick came from the whole region, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole." The birth of a new conscience from the Lord, restores our faith in Him, and the letter of the Word again becomes a power for good in our lives.

7. Or, shall we say, "The letter of the Word touches our wishful thinking as never before." The will, which wishes, "is the man himself, but not the thought, except so far as there passes into it something from the will. Therefore it is that the things which enter into the thought of man, and not through the thought into the will, do not defile him, only the things which enter through the thought into the will." (A. 8910.) No thought, however selfish or wicked, that enters the mind can harm us, so long as we see its true nature, and refuse to allow ourselves to be influenced by it at all. Keep the heart right, and every ugly and unchaste thought must in time die, or cease to exist, and have no part in us. The Syrophenician's daughter possessed of a devil illustrates the point. The Pharisee honored the Lord with his lips, but his heart was far from Him. The humility of the Gentile—the dog under the table accepting the children's crumbs that fall from it -- opens the heart to the Spirit that frees it from evil influences, opens the ear to understand and obey the truth, and opens the mouth to return thanks to the Giver of all good.

8. "In those days" He fed four thousand in Decapolis, and then returned to the land. Whatever we learn from the Scriptures is food for the soul. But to what purpose? What does it mean for the spiritual life? To the Pharisees—the hypocritical—it has no significance. "There shall no sign be given unto this generation." And for the disciples there is no meaning either, unless they "take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod,"—hardheartedness and blindness. "How is it that ye do not understand?" How can we know that our thinking is wishful thinking—from hell—when we feel sure that it is direct from God? In Bethsaida ("the house of fish." See Matt. 11:21) they brought a blind man to Jesus. The Lord led him out of the town, spat on his eyes, and put his hands on him. The blind man saw men as trees walking. The Lord placed his hands on the man's eyes, and he saw clearly. Wishful thinking can only be corrected by the Lord's help in withdrawing us from selfish considerations, and giving us a perception of the practicality of the Christian life—the spittle, the touch of his hands and instruction to look up. In this way we see the idea grow until it appears clearly in relation to life. All of which leads to the perception and the acknowledgment of the Lord as the Christ, the Anointed One. We are told that He endured temptation even to the passion of the cross. What that means to us is determined by our reaction to life's trials, with a faint or a stout heart. What is faith worth, if it cannot stand fire? What is friendship that fails when put to the test? "Whosoever shall be ashamed of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

9. Yea, "there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." After six days Peter, James and John saw the Lord transfigured before them on the mountain top in verification of his words. The glory of the Lord appears to all who prove true to the Christian life after many a painful struggle to remove the love of evil from the heart. But, the stronger the light the deeper its penetration into the dark places within. Mark speaks of the lunatic whom they met on descending from the heights as possessed by a deaf and dumb spirit. It is a sore trial when we are brought face to face with an unwillingness to hear or acknowledge the truth that condemns our attitude towards others, flighty, intolerant, and intractable inside. (E. 556.) "Lord, help thou mine unbelief." If this foul spirit is not controlled, it will undo all that has been accomplished. "This kind can

come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,"—the unremitting effort to control our aversion to correction. The Son of man will be crucified, but "He shall rise the third day." We do not see it; our eyes are holden by the love of having our own way. It is a hard lesson to learn: childlike simplicity is more acceptable to God than all our boasted civilization. The Gentile more readily responds to the will of God than the Christian. Instant action is necessary to stop evildoing and waywardness, otherwise they will gain proportions beyond recall. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Salt—the love of doing right— is a great preservative.

10. No two receive God's love alike. The difference is in God's truth, which defines the love, or gives expression to the individuality or personality. The two, the good and the true for each person, are intended to be united. Evil and falsity seek to divorce the good and the true in everyone. "Hardness of heart" strengthens the justification of the rupture, contrary to the order of heaven, the innocence of man reflected in the trustfulness of little children. The heavenly life is more than ethical culture—the keeping of the second table of the law. It is the enlightened and refined life with selfishness, or self-love, taken out of it. With God's help alone can we be entirely freed from the curse of modern life—our trust in the power of wealth. The power of wealth is proportioned to our unselfish use of it. We agree. Yet, the love of dominion holds the field. The Lord is on the way to Jerusalem to his death—no I to establish his kingdom! John and James plead for the first place in it. The other ten resent their presumptuousness. The Lord drew the attention of them all to the spirit of tyranny prevalent in the world's governments. The greatest in his kingdom "shall be servant of all," as exemplified in his own life. This teaching is the key to the understanding of all that follows, as is indicated in restoring sight to Bartimaeus after leaving Jericho. "And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

11. The entry into Jerusalem. The ass on which the Lord sat was "tied by the door without in a place where two ways met." Human reason is bound to a door commanding the approach to the world and the approach to heaven, (E. 208). When set free, and the Lord in the saddle, reason acts normally to judge right and wrong unmistakably as white and black. "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." The church that rejected Him condemned itself: it lacked even disinterested kindness, (the fruit of the fig tree). The temple was "a den of thieves." Religion existed for personal gain. If we only ask release in sincerity from any evil hurtful to the neighbor, every difficulty, howsoever insurmountable in appearance, can be removed, and that by the authority of the Lord. But, if reason is controlled by public opinion, the Word of the Lord lacks authority. It has no power back of it. The priests and elders could not tell whence came the baptism of John. "They feared the people."

12. The Lord establishes his authority in the church, which is likened to a vineyard. The fruit in clusters is the symbol of good teamwork. The Owner sent his servants to receive of the fruits. The husbandmen maltreated them, and killed the Son and heir to take possession of the vineyard. "The stone which the builders rejected, however, is become the head of the corner." The priests and Pharisees "knew that he had spoken the parable against them," and only deferred his arrestment through fear of the people. They, however, sent others to entangle Him. First came the Herodians. The Lord's answer implies that obedience to political or state laws must ever be conditioned by obedience to God's laws, which cannot be questioned. Then followed the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection. The materialist cannot grasp the idea of immortality, or of marriage. "When they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." "They know themselves into one. They are man and wife at once, when the true time is." (R. Browning.) The Rabbis disagreed about the relative importance of the commandments. In answer to one of the scribes on the point, the Lord classified the law of love to God,

and the law of love to the neighbor as the greatest, and the scribe could take no exception to it. But, "How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David," when David called Him his Lord? As to the body He was born in the house of David, but as to his soul He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the rejection of Him as such passed judgment upon the church. Therefore the Lord warned his hearers to beware of the scribes for their egotism, avarice and hypocrisy. In closing He drew attention to the widow's contribution of "all her living" to the temple, as being relatively more than the gifts of the wealthy. The gift is rated according to the spirit,—for God, or for self. The Lord requires us to love Him with all the heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength.

13. His public work was finished. He left the temple for the last time, forecasting its complete destruction, the sign of the ruin of the church. Viewing the situation from the mount of Olives the Lord told the disciples the signs of the subsequent decline and fall of the first Christian Church preceding his Second Coming. The meaning of the signs is hidden within the history of the first eighteen centuries of the Christian era, when the love of God and of one's fellow men had again sunk to zero. The sun and moon were darkened, and the stars shaken. But, now it is possible for men to see the Scriptures in a new light—the light of life presented in the Lord's life. The light is here, the new life is in its inception. The signal on life's highway for this age and generation is: "Watch: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

14. "Against the day of his burying" a woman anointed Jesus with spikenard, very precious. It is the coronation ritual: the woman represents mother church; and the ritual, "a wise and understanding heart," (1 Ki. 3:9, 12), which is indispensable for judgment in meeting the deepest trials in his life. Influenced by avarice and blasted hopes Judas Iscariot covenanted with the priests to betray Him. The Holy Spirit is received in the Sacrament according to repentance before taking it. (Can. IV. 9.) Two disciples followed the man bearing the pitcher of water to the upper chamber in Jerusalem. That evening they shared in the love feast, and walked together to the mount of Olives. The Lord declared that they would forsake Him, but He would meet them after He had risen in Galilee. Peter swore allegiance. The Lord knew that Peter would deny Him. Then followed the agony in Gethsemane, the betrayal, the trial before the Sanhedrin, and the denial of Peter, as in St. Matthew's Gospel.

15. The account of the trial, death and burial likewise varies only in details that are most illuminating, but beyond the bounds of this commentary.

16. The women were present at the burial, and they were the first to visit the tomb to complete the embalming of his body on the resurrection morn. A cherished memory and a blind trust in God are sometimes all that is left to us in our severest trials. The heart holds the key to death and life. And so the Lord also appears first to the women, and to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils, first of all. When told, the men would not believe it: they must see for themselves. Reason accepts nothing on trust: each individual must prove it to his own satisfaction, leaving the final proof to the test of deeds. (Galilee.) The Lord appeared to two of them "in another form," and to the eleven "as they sat at meat," and gave them the assurance of signs that would certify their belief. They would cast out devils in themselves, they would proclaim the power of the Gospel, they would exalt the sensuous life, they would be proof against the deadly corruptions of their times, and have power to survive every discouragement, or diseased condition of the mind. And so He ascended into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. He lives to help everyone to the utmost. And the disciple who follows in his footsteps preaches everywhere, the Lord working with him, "confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

St. Luke

The Gospel for All Mankind

Chapter 1. Dedicated to Theophilus, "one who loves God," and will surely find Him in Jesus Christ. This Gospel testifies to the certainty of the facts, which become priceless the better we understand their inner meaning. In our darkest days (Herod's time), when we remember God's oath (Zechariah and Elizabeth) to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), we have the assurance that heaven will return to earth through repentance by the grace of God (John) and the Son of God, the Savior, Jesus Christ. We are incredulous. But, to the suffering soul there are not lacking proofs of an impending change. Mary ("bitterness") burst into song: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc." And Zachariah gave forth that glorious Benedictus, after his lips were unsealed at the birth of his son, John.

2. A decree that all the world should be taxed brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where the Christ child was born. It is of importance that this fact should be fully authenticated. God became man. The Christian religion is meant for life here, for fishermen, for common people, for the wise-magi,—and for simple-hearted shepherds,—all, indeed, who protect brotherly feelings from rapacious lusts and passions. To these the Gospel, simply understood, offers the only solution to the problem of evil, (the babe in the manger). The child was called Jesus-Savior -and consecrated to the service of the Father—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," (the spiritually minded). And the child grew, and became a "Son of the Covenant" at twelve years of age. Then arose the question of the business of learning, or the business of living. He chose the latter and went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

3. Repentance is the introduction to the regenerate life. Make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. For the people luxury is undesirable, while millions are in want. Give freely of your thought and good will to all who can benefit by them. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." John required honesty of the plundering publican; and forbade violence, false witness and discontent in the soldiers. John baptized with water, but the Lord with the Holy Spirit and with fire-the purifying power of love. With the thought in prayer of purification from injustice in any form, the Lord was baptized in the Jordan by John. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him. He was then about thirty years of age. The gift of heaven was perfect, and He had suffered temptation for righteousness' sake. But, He had still further temptations to sustain until He perfected, or glorified, his Humanity, and became completely One with the Father. This is involved in the ascending genealogy from Joseph to "Enos, which was of Seth, which was of Adam, which was of God."

4. At the end of his temptations the devil "departed from Him for a season." His power increased with every victory, and He taught with authority. "All wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" in the synagogue in his home town. But, when they thought of Him as one of themselves and quite unjustified in claiming to be any better or superior to them. they regarded Him with contempt. And when He exposed their weakness, they contemplated murder. The degradation of Christianity is the degradation of self, beyond the help of the Lord. "He came unto his own inheritance (ta idia); and his own people (hoi idioi) received him not." (John 1:11.) His word, however, had power in Capernaum, even to the exorcism of unclean spirits, and the amazement of the people. The old adam in the disciples was stirred up by these experiences, (Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever), but the Lord

"rebuked it," and they became cooperative again. The presence of the Lord in his Word brings to light many other hurtful thoughts that come from an undisciplined heart, some of which are positive obsessions in plain violation of the Christian religion. They come to the surface for judgment.

5. Our reasoning by which we form our judgments needs to be freed from extraneous matters periodically. The nets need washing. The ship signifies the church. What the Lord accomplished by his teaching from the ship was represented by the draft of fishes beyond the capacity of the ships. When our missionaries teach practical Christianity, and the people are ready to sacrifice for it, the church will draw more into it than she can accommodate. The fishers—those in search of knowledge—will become fishers of men—those seeking the truths of religion for life, a life cleansed from any feeling of conceit (leprosy). Some may be incapable of practicing what they have learned, (paralysis), until they have been helped to rise to a higher plane of thought, see the sins that stand in the way, and feel the power of the mercy of the Lord in forgiveness, and in strength to live as they pray. All of which strengthens the conviction that Christianity is a life freed from sin, with new concepts of the purpose and meaning of it.

6. The third commandment, to keep the Sabbath day holy, receives an altogether new interpretation, which makes it not easier, but harder, to obey. "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath," to save, to restore power lost through inaction (the man with the withered hand), and to bless others in spite of the unreasonable opposition to change, (the madness of the scribes and Pharisees). After a night in prayer the Lord called the twelve apostles, named in three groups of four each; and, after healing many, gave the Sermon on the plain with its beatitudes and woes, the laws of love and mercy, and sincerity, ending with the false and true foundations of character. It is a reverberation of the Sermon on the mount, teaching for the inner as well as for the outer life.

7. In putting this teaching into practice it is well to remember that from childhood we have learned to be on our best behavior whenever it was necessary to gain our own ends. The centurion had only to say the word, and the soldier obeyed. It should be enough for the Lord to say the word and our outward conduct is at its best from pure motives at all times, and when under strain, as well as when free from it. The death of the old motive and the resurrection of the new motive are involved in the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, in the tribe of Issachar, which means "reward." The difference in reforming the outer life and regenerating the inner life is brought out in the comparison of John's baptism and the Lord's healing. The two are not antagonistic, but complementary. Our part is to remove evils and their lusts in the external man, "and the Lord is able in this way, and in no other, to put away evils in the internal man, and simultaneously in the external." (P. 100-128.)

What follows illustrates the difference between those who were baptized, and those who were not baptized, by John. Simon the Pharisee represents the unrepentant traditionalist and the woman the repentant non-conformist. Simon did not regard the Lord as clean for allowing a disreputable woman to cling to Him—he gave Him no water to cleanse his feet. ("Wash ye one another's feet." John 13:14.) He had no respect for Him—he neither kissed nor anointed Him. The penitent see their evil ways in contrast with the Lord's exemplary life, and are prostrated by the thought of their unworthiness. They wash his feet with their tears—recognise the purity of that life through tears, long to be like Him in a love that is boundless. "The life of conventional respectability excludes flagrant and open transgression; cold selfishness does not take itself to be sinful." (Canon Farrar.) It is not the amount of evil done, but the deep sense of sin, that marks the measure of the Lord's forgiveness.

8. The little group gained in numbers and strength, "and went through every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Every time we study the parable of the Sower it presents new features of the ways in which the meaning of the Word for practical uses is received by the indifferent, the superficial, the worldly, and the true disciple. Light is given to see everything that needs to be set right. Those closest to the Lord are they who "hear the word of God, and do it." To hear and do the Word must be brought to bear upon the universal abuse of wealth and pleasure. The aversion to meet it when the truth becomes personal is presented in the storm on the lake while on the way to the cure of the Gergesene demoniac. Then again and again we need to learn that when we have modified or changed bad habits in the external life, waste through the secret enjoyment of any lust and thoughts therefrom continue to annoy and vex us, until our ruling love of self dies, and the Lord gives a new unselfish love from Himself. All of this is pictured in the return to the land and the cure of the twelve year issue of blood, and twelve year old daughter of Jairus.

9. The vital principles of Christianity gain in power and authority through experience in overcoming the evils in the world. And always we must avoid the thought of personal gain, and see to it that we are guiltless of the wrongs we charge on others. The advance of Christianity alarms the power of evil, but so far only provokes an effort to explain it away. This lull in the conflict gives the opportunity to rest and recuperate. We then consider the cause in which we have enlisted. How does the world regard Christianity? What does it mean to us? Enough! There is so much to live and die for, we must let action attest our faith, rather than our words. Shame be to him who is ashamed of the Son of man, at his second coming. The visualization of what we are prepared to die for grants the vision of the glory of the leader—His transfiguration on the mount. "The pleasures of insanity" come before us again with renewed proof of the Lord's power to "rebuke the unclean spirit, and heal the child." Under the belief that the Lord can do anything we fail to see that worse is yet to come, and figure upon what the Lord can do for ourselves—our personal gains. This makes us intolerant of those who are for us, but are non-Christians, and intolerant of those who are against us. (The Samaritans.) Christianity exists to save and not destroy life. The disciple must be free from deceit and all evil thinking, free from the love of self, and endure to the end.

10. And for all those who have pledged their lives to this sacred obligation—"the seventy"—both heart and mind work under the direction of the Lord. They feel the world's need, and its intolerance of anything that savors of innocence. Wherever they find good they seek to strengthen it. But, above all, "they are not of the world." Their responsibility is incalculably greater than in any former age, but the power available through the Lord's presence in his Word is commensurate to every test put upon them. Their "names are written in heaven." The church in heaven is one with the church on earth, and all together one with the Lord. (R. 883, 884.) They are one through love to God and their neighbor. But, who is my neighbor? Anyone who has been taught the commandments, and falls by the way in the effort to apply them to life, will be shunned by those whose churchmanship gives self interest or orthodoxy the first place. But, the non-conformist who has a heart—the hated Samaritan does all he can to save the half-dead man with sympathy, kind words and hospitalization. The Lord is the Good Samaritan. "Go thou and do likewise." "The good of love is the all of heaven and the church." (R. 908.) It is, therefore, greatly to be desired that our hearts should be influenced primarily by the Lord's mercy, and not constantly troubled about uniformity in method, or belief. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

11. We need to pray for it all the time. Pray for bread! Many come to our doors when we have nothing to give them—no love for them. The Lord and heaven are unresponsive: we find it impossible to love some others, as the Lord hath loved us. A persistent demand for a disinterested love brings a response, and the

open eye to see the right thing to do, or to say. Ask, seek, knock! We know how to help those whom we love. "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" It's a miracle when the Lord opens the lips to say the word that has been held back by injunction of an evil spirit within. But who cast out that evil spirit? Not Beelzebub! If Satan cast out Satan his kingdom is at an end. To stop sinning, and later recant, opens the door for worse to follow-profanation of the truth. (P. 231.) "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." This is an evil generation. Many Gentiles "lead a better life than Christians," (H. 319), though there are Christians who think of them as "lesser breeds without the law." Light is given us to see the way to heaven, but when "thine eye is evil, thy body is full of darkness." The Pharisee saw that the Lord failed to observe their traditions in not washing his hands before dining with him. The Lord exposed the hypocrisy in the Pharisees and lawyers for our enlightenment and salvation. It is love which cleanses, not lustrations. The outside of the cup is clean, but the inside full of wickedness. And they had to answer for the death of their prophets. They had not lived up to their light, and discredited the Word in the eyes of the people. The Lord's words inflamed their determination to catch a word that would incriminate Him, and justify his apprehension.

12. The Lord then warned his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Evil hidden within must come to the surface. Be sincere, and fear not persecution and death; fear rather the evil that destroys character. Trust in God, and be right. It is blasphemy to know we are in the wrong, and deliberately nurse the evil. Next, "beware of covetousness." The Lord knew that the appeal to adjudicate in a case of inheritance was prompted by selfishness. What a man is is not determined by what he has-at least in God's sight. It is a common, but sad fallacy, that great wealth of goods or knowledge makes man great, though he well knows that he cannot take a cent with him, when he dies. Take no anxious thought for the morrow. Think more of the wise use of money or knowledge, and you can await death with equanimity. According to our gift of knowledge, so is our responsibility more or less. Great wealth carries a heavy responsibility. And the Lord comes to send fire and a sword on the earth-fire to refine character and a sword to fight against and destroy evil-the war to end war without as well as within. We discern the signs of the times, but often fail to discern what is right, and must suffer for it, until we have squared our account with the Lord to the very last mite.

13. Sin is the ultimate cause of crime and most disasters. They who suffer, Gentile or Jew, are not necessarily to blame. Sometimes they are quite innocent victims. But, crime and disaster will exact an unduly heavy toll of life, unless we repent and change our ways of living. "Except ye repent" is the point of the parable of the fruitless fig tree. At the end of the third year the owner ordered that it be cut down, but granted a respite to give it a last chance. Figs signify the fruits of a generous disposition. The generous disposition, however, is dead when tradition, custom, or etiquette prevent us from helping someone in need. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus healed a woman suffering from curvature of the spine on the Sabbath day. "Are there then few that be saved?" It is all a question of choice. We may imagine that we are on the right road, in the right direction, when our professions and worship are everything that could be desired. We cannot see the strait gate, however, when our eyes are blind from self-righteousness, justifying all manner of self-indulgence, and resentful of the least criticism. We put self first, and God last. The reversal of this order alone turns us to the gate, and the narrow way beyond. The Lord stresses the point in his message to that fox, Herod: "I cast out devils, and I do cures to day, and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." These three days, like the three temptations, represent a lifetime, or, rather, they express the quality of life's experiences to the last one of them necessary to reach perfection, through his rejection, and death in Jerusalem, with nothing but pity and forgiveness in his heart for his enemies.

14. The Lord manifests this spirit too at the home of the Pharisee, though well He knew that the object of those present was to find occasion to slay Him. He was in the den of lions; and they could not harm Him till his hour had come. It was the Sabbath day. He healed a man who had dropsy, and silenced his accusers. He pointed out their weakness in seeking the uppermost rooms at feasts, in inviting only rich neighbors for gain, and leaving out the poor and maimed who cannot recompense them. Self effacement carries its own reward within. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." The Lord invites everyone to eat with Him—to share his Love in humility. There are many, however, who spurn the invitation. They have acquired selfish ideas and practices to which they are wedded. They prefer the old with all its misery for self and others to the new with its hope of salvation to the faithful. The Lord has given his Word that all who acknowledge their poverty and their imperfections may look to Him for help and relief, even though they feel moved to change living conditions under compulsion, for self-preservation. Christianity is synonymous with an implacable hatred of evil as sin. Bearing our cross means suffering until we get rid of it. The cost of building a new civilization, and what we must fight for and die for to attain it, is negligible. Savorless salt is valueless. The lack of any effort to do right when occasion demands it means a lost cause.

15. Then publicans and sinners drew near to Jesus to hear Him, while the Pharisees and scribes poured contempt upon Him for eating with them. The Lord describes the joy in heaven,—that is, in heaven within, as well as above,—after shunning evil as sin. Woe is inseparable from unneighborliness, and corresponding joy from a changed attitude toward everyone. Our birthright is incomplete until the lost sheep is found. We were born to love God. The wisdom taught in childhood, (one in ten pieces of silver), and lost through disobedience, is restored to its place of honor, when the heart is right. And the parable of the lost son illuminates the universal habit of debasing a good inheritance for one's own profit, or for the praise of men. Self-righteousness (the elder son) blinds man to the sufferings of the repentant soul, and the blessings inherent in the change wrought by the Lord through humiliation.

16. Whatever good there may be in us is a gift for which we need to account to the Giver. Reason is the steward, who recognises that even with the best of intentions and efforts, we can never pay back our indebtedness to the Lord, a hundred measures of oil and a hundred measures of wheat. Fortunately, the Giver will compound the debt for fifty measures of oil and four score measures of wheat, representing all the good and truth we can restore to its rightful place in our lives through temptations. Our faithfulness in the effort to use the unrighteous mammon to the best advantage possible to us is the measure of our trustworthiness. The hypocrite holds that honesty is impossible in the present corrupt world. Nevertheless, the law is immutable: suffering is inseparable from dishonesty, which is essential adultery. Dives represents the well educated churchman, and Lazarus the despised Gentile, accepting the simple teachings of religion, and taking comfort from the sympathy of fellow-sufferers in search of a cure. That is the outside. The inside reverses the picture. "Dignities and riches are curses to the evil." (P. 217.) Hardship is a blessing to the poor in spirit. The distinction between the use and abuse of wealth cannot be learned by dictation from above, but only through a conscience enlightened by the Word in humility.

17. It is well to bring our differences into the open as far as is possible, but hold a grudge against no one. A grudge may have grown to mountainous proportions, but is still removable by faith. Its removal is nothing to boast about. Regret that we gave it free play helps us to realise that we are unprofitable servants of the Lord. The temptation to think overmuch of ourselves and outwardly appear to be unassuming is closely related to our progress in self-mastery. In God's sight it is hypocrisy. We owe more to God: we owe all to Him. The Lord healed ten lepers, but only one returned to give thanks. The kingdom of God is within, and cometh not with observation. Life moves in cycles each closing with a crisis that

demands judgment. "When the Son of man is revealed"—that is, what the Lord requires of us individually—then we must see to it that we keep the heart right, and faith will work with power. We must not descend from the house top, to save the old stuff below; nor look backward. "Remember Lot's wife." Whoever refuses to part with the old selfish life, loses life eternal—that is, here and now, every time the choice is for self.

18. Our deliverance, however, is not always immediate. We must pray without ceasing. If an unjust judge will grant the petition of an unfortunate widow to get rid of her, how much more readily shall God maintain the cause of his elect. Delay then depends upon the petitioner's need and trust in God. The Pharisee has nothing to pray for: he is self-sufficient and self-satisfied. The publican had need of everything, and prayed for mercy. He was "justified"; that is, open to receive any specific want; the Pharisee was unjustified. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no case enter therein." The self-sufficiency of the disciples forbade parents bringing infants to the Lord, shook their trust in God, and blinded them to the cause and meaning of the Lord's sufferings. "They that went before" the Lord—and not they who followed Him—rebuked the blind man who cried for mercy by the wayside. The more they objected, the louder his cry. In answer to his petition the Lord restored his sight, and said "Thy faith hath saved thee."

19. The eyes have been opened to see the Lord. Zacchaeus, (meaning "pure"), a man of small stature, a publican and sinner, climbed into a fig tree to see Jesus. The Lord has a place in the soul that is pure, humble and penitent, and exalted by generosity—giving half his goods to the poor, and making ample restitution for ill gotten gain. "This day is salvation come to this house." The Son of man comes to save the lost, and not to establish an earthly kingdom. He went to establish his kingdom, and come again. His servants started with the gift of heaven (ten signifies "remains"), with an equality of opportunity, (one pound each). His citizens hated Him. On his return one servant had gained ten pounds, and another five, by trading. They had made good use of their gifts. But one hid his pound through fear that he could never meet the demands of an austere master. We gain in the power of self-government as we put to use all that the Lord has committed to our care. We lose through negligence. But enmity destroys the love of God in the heart. The Lord's kingdom is established by reason in freedom. The ass set free on which He sat signifies human reason. "Never man sat" on that ass. Man, independent of God, abused his reason to prove good evil, and evil good. The Lord brought reason under control to distinguish right from wrong, and rule humanity in freedom for "peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." He wept over the city because of its wilful blindness, and the frightful consequences of its unfaithfulness. He cleansed the temple, and started a new order.

20. He drew the people after Him, to the further enagement of his enemies, who questioned his authority in vain. He charged them with the intent to murder Him, as the heir of the vineyard, that they might take possession of it, and be released from any accounting for the use of it. They failed to entrap Him on the question of tribute to Caesar.. or of the resurrection of the dead. David's own words acknowledged his sovereignty. He warned the people to beware of the scribes, who have brought upon themselves a greater judgment by their notorious hypocrisy and corruption.

21. They gave of their abundance unto the offerings of God: but the widow's mites were "all the living that she had." We owe everything to the Lord. The temple itself was an imposing building, but would be destroyed with the fall of the city, the direct consequence and pictorial description of the fall of the church and state. What follows describes the changing states of the Christian Church in its decline culminating in the Second Coming of the Lord. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy

to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Thus ended the day's work. That night He abode in the mount of Olives, in close touch with the Father's love to sustain Him in the trials to follow.

22. The conspiracy ripens. Judas made his bargain with the priesthood. Peter and John went into the city to prepare for the passover. And when the hour arrived they partook of the meal, and then the Lord instituted the Sacrament that incorporated all the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament in the representation of the flesh and blood of Him who gave a new meaning to the Covenant in giving his "life a ransom for many." The greatest in his kingdom are they who follow in his steps. The betrayal and denial of Him by a disciple may happen many times, till faith through repentance has been strengthened to withstand every test put upon it, even until the things concerning us-all selfish purposes-have an end. It is strengthening to have the assurance that in our worst trials the Lord and heaven are very close at hand. In his last trials the Lord's "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. . . . Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Then followed the betrayal, the denial, and the trial and condemnation by the Sanhedrin on the admission that He was "the Son of God," the rock on which the Church is built.

23. In the trial before Pilate the Lord faced the charge that He claimed to be "Christ a King." On being questioned He admitted the truth of it. Pilate disclaimed the charge, because Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and sent Him to Herod, who asked many questions, but received no answer. Finally Pilate gave sentence, and "delivered Jesus to their will." On the way to Golgotha the women wept. The Lord, however, remarked that they themselves and their children were in greater need of sympathy. He had the strength to endure all (a green tree), but they had less power of resistance (the dry), having often given way to evil in ignorance, or even when they knew it, and might have resisted it. The first words that came from the cross were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The malefactors on either side represented fallen humanity, repentant and unrepentant. "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers," (John 10:8), using the life given from the Lord as their own without recognising their indebtedness. The penitent heart is with the Lord in paradise so long as it keeps right with God. The last of the seven words from the cross were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." They mark the completed self-surrender of the human will to the Divine Will. The body wrapped in fine white linen was laid in a sepulchre, "wherein never man before was laid." The Sacred Scripture, like a garment, inwraps the life, (psyche-the natural, external, animal life), which He "laid down for his friends." (John 10:17 and 15:13.) The church is entrusted with the preservation of it for all time.

24. The opened Word reveals the glorified Humanity of the Lord. The church cherishes the belief that the Lord has risen indeed: the world is skeptical. Peter sees "the linen clothes laid by themselves" in the empty tomb, and wonders. Two on their way to Emmaus are downcast over their disillusionment. They had misplaced their trust in the Christ. The opening of the Scriptures gives a new conception of the purpose for which the Lord lived and died. Our hearts burn with mingled feelings of shame and joy. What unworthy creatures we are! And yet, we are sure that we have found a friend in Jesus. "He was known of them in the breaking of the bread." The two shared their experience with the eleven in Jerusalem. "The Lord hath appeared to Simon." Through the love of obedience the spirit and life in the Word of the Lord permeates the love of the neighbor and the love of the Lord in man "that repentance and remission of sins 'should be preached in his name among all nations." The organised church must lead the way, studying the Word until the light comes, and with it "the power from on high" to walk in that light.

St. John

The Word Incarnate

It is well to bear in mind the high purpose of this profound Gospel, namely, to convince the reader that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing he might have life through his name." (c. 20:31.)

Chapter 1. "In the beginning was the word." The logos is the thought in the spoken word. God spake and all things came into being. "All the laws of order by which God preserves the universe are truths." (T. 87.) "The life of the Divine Wisdom of the Lord is light." (E. 1134.) His own turned from the light. The word then became flesh, "the only begotten of the Father", to reveal the lovingkindness and holiness of the Infinite to man. "All conjunction requires an object, and the conjunction effected is according to the quality of the object." (A. 8705.) John bears testimony to the Lord's coming. He saw "the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him," when baptized in Jordan. The dove signified "the thoughts respecting regeneration and purification," which are the essence of the ritual. (T. 144.) "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." "The next day." Manliness (Andrew) in anyone seeking a better life awakens an interest in the life of Christ, and a perception that faithfulness (Peter) to the Christian ideal will undoubtedly bring a new order into the world. "We have found the Messiah," the Anointed One. Faith is fundamental to the project. "The day following." A new understanding of the Word (Philip, "a lover of horses") is also necessary. Then follows the "gift of God" (Nathanael), the vision to a guileless spirit of the ideal life revealed in the Word—"heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." First the ascent—a sight of what life might be, and then the descent—the attempt to make conditions as they are what they ought to be according to the vision.

2. "What they ought to be!" The marriage in Cana of Galilee on "the third day," takes up the point. The changing of the water into wine in the "six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews," tells us what happens within. There are three planes of life—the spiritual, the moral and the civil. "To will well is the province of the spiritual life, and to act well of the moral and civil life. Everyone, whether evil or good, lives a civil and moral life; for who does not wish to be called honest, and just? Evil men act justly and honestly solely for the sake of themselves and the world. But those who have acted honestly and justly from regard to the Divine laws, act wisely because they are conjoined to the angels of heaven, from whom wisdom is communicated to them." (H. 529-533.) In this way the natural truth for cleansing the practical life becomes spiritual truth, alive with the Spirit of God. The water for washing the hands before eating is turned into wine, good wine. "And when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." It often happens that right thinking turns a man's head. He takes the glory to himself. The temptation to use one's good name pridefully for personal gain is a common experience. The Lord met it when He cleansed the temple, saying, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." Asked to give proof of his authority, He said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of his body." That they destroyed: "the third day He rose from the dead." That third day was significant of the process of perfecting his Human to the last throughout his entire lifetime. The disciples understood it after his resurrection. Experimentia docet. The Lord made no explanation: He kept his counsel to Himself, "for he knew what was in man."

3. Closely connected with the cleansing of the temple is the subject of conversion. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This conversion is more than a change of belief from what is false to what is true. It is rather an inversion of the order of life from learning to practicing. (A. 4269.) Every boy or girl knows when commencement is over that the time has arrived to use his or her education to earn a living, or the right to live. Even so every boy or girl has learned that there is a heap of evil in self and the world, and that no one can enjoy lasting happiness until it is removed. We earn "our daily bread" as we judge and overcome evil, for the good of others; that is, for God's sake. (L. 24.) God so loved the world that He came into it to show us the way out of hell and to heaven. Light streams from His Word, or from His Life in that Word, to distinguish good from evil in the heart of everyone. We must accept correction, or let evil flourish. There is a certain joy in fighting for the right, or in shunning evils as sins, but we cannot earn the full joy of living, until our labor is ended. John the Baptist, as "the friend of the bridegroom" rejoiced in the voice of the bridegroom but admitted, "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all. God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

4. "Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples." The water which He gives to the open-minded is living water, and becomes in him who partakes of it "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Lord sitting at the well represents the Word. "The Holy Divine from the Lord through the heavens flows in with the man in the world who acknowledges the Divine of the Lord and the sanctity of the Word whilst he read it. Such a man can be instructed and imbibe wisdom from the Word as from the Lord Himself, or from heaven itself." (E. 1074.) The woman had no husband, although she had had five husbands. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." True worship in Jew or Gentile is the worship of God "in spirit and in truth," and leads to the acknowledgment of the Lord as "the Christ, the Savior of the World." The disciples pressed the Lord to eat. "But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and finish his work." This food is the complement of the water of life. "Eating stands for information concerning good, and drinking for information concerning truth," (A. 9412), which increase with action. We learn more from teaching, or from practice, than from reading. "The sower and the reaper rejoice together," as we learn to drop all thought of reward, or wages. (A. 8002.) The Prophet, lacking honor "in his own country" (Judea), returned to Galilee for the second miracle. He healed the nobleman's son in response to a faith in "the spoken word" of the Lord as God Almighty, without any external proof. On this faith the Church of the Lord is built on this earth.

5. "After this," the Lord established the same faith in "his own country," Judea, as in "his own country," Galilee, despite the incredulity of the people. Many sick folk even today-sick in the spirit, or the flesh-are healed by hearing or learning a truth that grips them, and putting it to the test in practice. An angel stirs the water of the pool of Bethesda—"house of mercy." But here is the case of one who has suffered from an infirmity, and long struggled in vain to overcome it. He puts his trust in the teachings of the Word, but they do not help him. He cannot move from his bed. He sees others helped, but fails for lack of self-help. The voice of the Lord—"Rise, take up thy bed and walk"—electrifies his faith, cures him and brings peace to his soul. It was the Sabbath day. He knew not who inspired faith to action. The church gives answer: the Word gives answer. The love of God makes the Word dynamic. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." As the Father raiseth up the dead, so the Son quickeneth whom he will. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." "The works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." We think we have eternal life because we believe the scriptures-in theory-but not in practice. This is a deadly fallacy. "How can ye believe, which receive honor of one another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?"

6. "After these things" Jesus went to Bethsaida on the northern side of the sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and fed the five thousand. Take only a few of the happy experiences in childhood, and some of the things we were taught then about right living, (five loaves and two fishes), and there is no limit to the content in them, even beyond anything that we can use in a lifetime. Life is nothing but the evolvment of our early experiences and thoughts. Everything in the tree lies concealed within the seed. The contemplation of this truth looms so large, that it overshadows the responsibility attached to it. When Jesus perceived that the people intended to take Him by force and make Him a king, He went into a mountain to pray. The conflict within is mirrored in the storm on the lake. The victory won is pictured in his walking upon the tempestuous waters. And the lesson learned is set forth in the discourse upon the bread of life. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day." It is hard to believe. "The words are spirit, and they are life." Thereupon followed the confession of Peter,— "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

7. "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." He was not afraid of death. But He was not ready: He had work to do. The heart of the Son of man did not yet beat in consonance with the heart of the Son of God. "The feast of tabernacles was at hand" with all its rich memories of past experiences of the Father's mercies in deliverance from evil. But He was not prepared to enter into the spirit of the festival. The Jews hated Him. "Neither did his brethren believe in him." He went to the feast "not openly, but as it were in secret," and taught in the temple. His bold denunciation of their sins widened the breach with the Pharisees. "The last day, that great day of the feast," the Lord declared Himself the giver of the living water to the thirsty soul. Each day of the feast, except the last, a pitcher of water was poured on the side of the altar of burnt offering in commemoration of the miraculous supply of water to the Israelites in the wilderness. (Num. 20:8, Isa. 12:3.) Thus fittingly on the eighth day, when no water was poured out, the Lord said, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." To the believer truths from the Scriptures flow in abundance from the belly, or bowels of compassion for suffering humanity. (E. 183.) To the believer in the Lord as the only God in heaven and earth! This is the issue now and hereafter before the world.

8. The next morning in the temple the Lord was called upon to pronounce judgment upon a woman taken in adultery. He condemned the act—He wrote on the ground, and continued writing while each of her accusers left the building under condemnation. He did not condemn the woman, but told her to go, and sin no more. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world." And so the Lord makes the solemn announcement here: "I am the light of the World; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Pharisees took exception to his claim. The Lord reasoned with them in vain. He pointed out the serious consequences of a denial. "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins." He saw them in the light from the inmost to the outmost. He knew that they lived in bondage to sin. "To do evil from the delight of love appears like freedom, but it is servitude because it is from hell." (A. 9586.) "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will to do." The claims of the Speaker and the condemnation in the light angered the Jews. They took up stones to cast at Him, but He mysteriously eluded them.

9. "And as he passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." Blind to the truth about God from infancy. Blind through ignorance. Taught untruths as truths. Misled by fallacies, and self-justifications of evil. And associated with others who exist only to get the most out of life for themselves. He is blind to "the Light of the world" through no fault of his own. There is good in the man, (earth). He may have heard

of the Lord's teaching, for instance, about the Good Samaritan, (the Lord's spittle). He may see an occasion to "go and do likewise," (the waters of Siloam, meaning "sent"). His eyes are opened, and he has found a mission in life. The neighbors notice the change for the better. Some of them are in doubt about it. Others question the sincerity of the convert. The issue for the church centred in the personality of the Healer. The parents through fear of the Jews declined to testify to the Lord's work. Their son could speak for himself. And, though he knew not his benefactor, yet he felt certain that "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing." For this the convert was excommunicated. Being thus disowned by the old order in both state and church makes it possible for the convert to believe that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and worship Him. To sin in ignorance is guiltless, but "to see and understand that a thing is evil, and still do it, makes a man guilty." (A. 9069.)

10. The sheepfold is heaven, and the Lord is "the door of the sheep." "He that entereth not by the door, but climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." They who lead a Christian life because it pays are thieves. They use that which does not belong to them without acknowledging any indebtedness to the Owner. The good shepherd leads, and the sheep follow him. They know his voice, they go in and out, and find pasture. They have freedom and an abundant life. The thief steals, kills and destroys. The selfish have no real consideration for the finer feelings in others, or in themselves. And like hirelings, when they see the wolf coming, they leave the sheep, and flee. The better nature in man is often ruined by hatred in time of war, or adversity. The good shepherd layeth down his life—the animal, or selfish, life—for the sheep. "This commandment have I received of my Father." It sounds like sheer madness to the timeserver. Yet this selfless life is the Christ-life, one with the Father in heaven. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." Don't scrap the works. Be charitable at the least, to start with, and the greater works of the Christ-life will appear in proper perspective later.

11. As soon as the heart stops beating, life goes from the body, and mortification sets in. Similarly when the church dies at the centre—Jerusalem—life perishes at the circumference; that is, among the Gentiles. The resuscitation of religion among the Gentiles is pictured in raising Lazarus from the dead without the walls of Jerusalem. The name Lazarus,—the same as that given to the beggar, full of sores, in the parable,—is significant. Either meaning may be attached to it, "without help," or, "God is my help," and strengthens the message. The disciples tried to dissuade the Lord from returning to Judea, where the Jews sought to take his life. But He answered: "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. I go that I may awake him out of sleep"—the sleep of death. When the Church that has the Word is on the point of extinguishing "The Light of the world," the Lord provides that anyone "who lives in any kind of truth derived from good may be in enlightenment, and not wander into falsities." (E. 430.) The raising of Lazarus, however, was dependent upon the belief of Martha and Mary in the Lord as the resurrection and the life. They represent the love of the letter and the spirit of God's law. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" After the raising of Lazarus, the die was cast. The high priest "prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for that nation only, but that he might also gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death."

12. The Lord knew that the end, with its last and hardest trials, was near. It was just "six days before the passover." He was at supper with the family in Bethany. Mary took the opportunity to express her overflowing gratitude for the restoration of her brother by anointing the Lord's feet with costly spikenard. It was the Lord's supper with the Gentiles, to be followed by the decision of the chief priests to kill Lazarus. The Jewish Church ceased to function for the Gentiles from that time. The next day the people acclaimed

Jesus "the King of Israel" as He rode into the city on an ass. This represents the order of subordination—"the natural man ought to serve the rational, and this the spiritual, and this the celestial, and this the Lord." (A. 2781.) Jesus then said to certain Greeks and others who came to Him, that the hour when the Son of man should be glorified had come; which means, that He must meet the trial of giving up his self-will to do the Divine will. He dreaded the ordeal, but prayed for strength to meet it; and "a voice came from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The judgment was at hand, and with his ascension He would draw all men unto Him. The reaction of the listeners was varied. Some disbelieved; others believed, but were afraid to confess Him before men. We pass judgment upon ourselves as we accept or reject it. "The light of the world" is here to save the world. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

13. During supper time the Lord took a towel and basin of water and washed the feet of his disciples. We have no part with Him, unless He wash us, and "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." This means the purification of the natural or external man. "In abstaining from evil and doing good we are to act as of ourselves; at the same time believing and acknowledging that the will, the understanding and the power to do so are of the Lord alone." After this pattern we owe mutual service in humility, and mutual cleansing for others. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "Faith is not in man whilst it is only in his knowledge and thought, but when it is also in his will and in his actions." (E. 250.) Then came the secret announcement to John that Judas would betray the Lord, and the open declaration that Peter would deny Him, between which He gave them a new commandment. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." Self-love and the love of the world are often too strong for us to resist, and we—at least temporarily—place little value on our profession of Christianity, and prove faithless to our Lord in our faithlessness to one another.

14. The Lord knows this perfectly, and yet He says, "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you in my Father's house, that where I am, there ye may be also." Thomas's question brings out the point that the Lord is the way to that home, and Philip's question elicits the assurance that we see the Father in the Son, for they are One. The Father doeth the works: we shall do greater works than healing, or even raising the dead. Whatever we ask in his Name, He will do. He will give us the Comforter to defend us in every trial. With every victory we shall know "that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Love is the fulfilment of the law. "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

15. "I am the true vine." The word for "true" (alethinos is the opposite of "spurious," and not of "lying." He is the genuine, the perfect Vine, "the perfect Bread," "the perfect Light." The vine is the symbol of mutual love, perfect in the Lord, and purged and made perfect in all who abide in his love. "The branch to be ingrafted can be taken from no other source than the Lord who is the tree of life." (P. 296.) "They who are in the Lord and the Lord in them are in all power, so that whatever they will they can do." (R. 951.) We then will nothing but what the Lord gives us to will, "and this is good, and good is from himself." (E. 295.) The Father is glorified in bearing much fruit, and sharing His joy to the fullest extent. The Lord's love for us reaches its pinnacle in laying down his life for his friends. That life is the natural, sensuous, selfish life that separates us from our friends and from the Lord. That life is full of hatred, and the determination to destroy the Lord's love in our hearts. But the Comforter is always present to testify of the Lord, and uphold our hands in doing the Lord's will.

16. These things are said that we should have no cause for stumbling. We meet with opposition in the world. It is expedient that the Lord leaves us alone in our sorrows, but with a sense of responsibility. Then comes the Paraclete—the Advocate, who stands close by and "convicts the world of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." We are unbelievers when we fail to live up to our professions. We know that the Lord used the same power available to Him, as to us, perfected his Human, and made it Divine. We are, therefore, justly convicted if we do not get rid of the petty sins for which we are individually responsible. "The Spirit of truth shall declare unto you the things that are to come," according to our ability to bear them. Our sorrows may seem to be beyond endurance, but turn to joy when borne in the right spirit. New concepts of the truth are born of our sorrows. The Lord comes and goes, and comes again and again. His peace is our peace when we take to heart words uttered with the trial ending in the cross on Calvary right before his eyes: "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I (the pronoun is emphatic) have overcome the world." Thus ends this searching, but most inspiring heart to heart talk with the disciples in the upper chamber in Jerusalem.

17. The discourse closes with the Prayer of the Great High Priest for himself (vv. 1-5), for the Apostles (vv. 6-19), and for the church and the world (vv. 20-26). Jesus has finished the work given Him to do: He has power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as have a living spark of God's love in their hearts. Complete Thou the work: "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." I pray for those whom Thou gavest me, who have kept thy word, and believed that Thou didst send me. Keep them as one. The world hates them, because they are not of the world. Keep them from the evil. I have sent them into the world, and have sanctified myself for their sakes, that they also may be sanctified through thy truth. Neither pray I for them alone' but for their converts that they may be one, even as we are one, and that for the conversion of the world. The Lord from love, which is infinite because Divine, desires to draw man even to Himself, and so to bless him with all glory and happiness. (A. 6645.) Not uniformity in doctrine or rituals, but love alone, can effect the mystical union of the Lord in man, and man in the Lord in heaven and earth. (A. 1013, R. 520.)

18. The group of friends and their Leader left the city and repaired to the garden of Gethsemane. At the betrayal when the Lord said that He was the one whom they sought, "they went backward, and fell to the ground." This might have happened to prove that He laid down his life of Himself, but it certainly implies the ruination of character in anyone in Christendom who deliberately rejects the Christian life. It was necessary that the Lord should drink the cup the Father gave Him. Peter was therefore fighting on the wrong side when he cut off Malchus's ear. The default of love on the part of Judas was succeeded by the failure of faith in Peter. He warmed himself at the fire to remove the chill of his denials. It was a cold night within, as well as without. The cock-crow marked the end of the old dispensation, and Peter's tears the beginning of a new church. Jesus admitted to Pilate that He was a King, but asserted positively that his Kingdom was not of this world. "The Lord as a King is Divine truth, for this is the royalty of the Lord in heaven, but his Divine good is the priesthood there." (E. 27; and see 31.) Pilate found no fault in Him. But the people demanded that he set free Barabbas, a robber, in preference to Jesus.

19. Then Pilate tried to convince the people that the Lord was innocent, and harmless. He scourged Him and presented Him in mockery as a king with a crown of thorns on his head. Jesus said, "Behold the man," but the multitude was destitute of mercy, or pity. He claimed to be the Son of God, and ought to die, according to their law. The state had no jurisdiction in this matter; Caiaphas—the church—must take the responsibility. The state, however, must act, because Christianity is opposed to imperialism, or, the love of power to exalt self. "Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." What irony! To get their

own way the chief priests cried, "We have no king but Caesar." In spite of their protest Pilate retained his title on the cross, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS," in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The church then passed into the hands of those who make the love of the Lord their first concern in life. To Mary He said, "Woman, behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." And Jesus said "I thirst." "He desired a new church which should acknowledge Him. From Divine Love He willed and desired the salvation of mankind." (E. 83, 386.) And when He said, "It is finished," He bowed his head and expired. The soldiers broke the bones of the malefactors, but not of the Lord, because they saw that He was dead. But they pierced his side, and blood and water flowed from the wound. The letter of the Word is intact, but the church had violated its literal and spiritual meaning. (A. 9163, R. 26.) "They who pierce him' stands for those who altogether deny the Lord, for such kill and pierce Him in themselves." (E. 38.) We may not be guilty of such a great wrong, but we can at least see what the wickedness of the heart leads to, if we refuse to take hold of the hand of our Helper, when offered to us in time of need. The memories of all that the Word become flesh has meant to us, and the hope of some day becoming more truly Christian than we are at present, are involved in the anointing of the Lord's body, and laying it in a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid, in a garden nigh to the place where He was crucified. (A. 10252.)

20. A new church arises in the least particular as often as the love of the Lord and faith in Him operate in anyone who is being regenerated and becoming new. (A. 2405.) But, where is the Lord? We do not seem to make any progress in the regenerate life. Both head and heart are sorely tried. It appears that the Lord is gone: the record of his life is in the Scriptures, but nothing more. Nothing but the linen clothes are in the tomb. We seem to be rather worse than better. But Mary, out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils, saw her Lord, and told the disciples that she had seen Him. The heart that has been chastened with sorrow sees evidences of the risen Lord in spite of all appearances to the contrary. And then the Lord comes to his church, and revives her spirit to resist evils as sins and enter into the good life. The gain is measured by the resistance of evil, and the loss by the neglect of evil, or the love of it. There are Thomases, however, who will not believe without physical proof. The Lord does not deny their request. It is perfectly legitimate for anyone to call for tangible proofs of the Lord's Advent in this age. But the strongest evidence is only to be found in the new spirit of the times that is intolerant of injustices and shams of every kind, and more sympathetic to the sufferings of their fellow men. Moral and spiritual evidence is stronger than that of the senses. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thomas Huxley once summed up the scientific creed in these few words: "God give me strength to face a fact though it slay me." How much more is implied in the Christian's creed: "God give me strength to face the fact of Christ though it slay ME"? Belief in either case counts for nothing unless it works. And so John writes-, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

21. This Epilogue, or Appendix, to the Gospel concerns the future development of the church. On this the third appearance of the Lord to the disciples in Galilee, He told the unsuccessful fishermen to cast the net on the right side of the ship and they would have an abundant catch, which means failure for the church that puts truth or doctrine first and love second, but success for the church whose teachers (fishers of men) use reason (the net) to convince the well-disposed "that all things are to be done from the good of love and charity," (the right side of the ship, E. 513, 600). The Lord foresaw the decline and fall of the Christian Church because it made faith more important than love. He asked Peter if he loved Him, and Peter assured Him thrice that he did. But the love Peter said he had for the Lord differed greatly from the

love the Lord asked for. The Lord's love (agape) is boundless and timeless. Peter's love (phileo) is limited to those who think alike, and becomes more and more sectarian until it reaches the point of establishing an infallibility for one's own belief, and excommunication, in the heart, if not on the lips, for every one who calls it in question. The Christian Church failed to feed the lambs and the sheep, for lack of God's love (agape), and came to an end. "When thou wast young," said the Lord to Peter, "thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." The Lord said, "Follow me." But Peter turned his back upon the Lord. And, seeing John following, he said contemptuously, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" The Lord, however, rebuked Peter, and said to John, "Follow me." And., in course of time, "the disciple whom Jesus loved, (agapao), which also leaned on Jesus' breast at supper," was taken to the isle of Patmos, to see the visions which, rightly interpreted, enable us to understand the inner causes of the failure of Christianity in the past, and the truths by which the New Church, the crown of all the churches, will be established in the world.

Revelation

The Crown of All the Churches

This book foretells the culmination of the Christian religion in regaining the lost innocence of the race in the beginning. Like the Gospels, Revelation is divided into four sections organically related to each other in their inner sense. First, the seven golden candlesticks, representing the seven churches, with the Son of man walking in their midst; second, the opening of the seven seals; third, the sounding of the seven trumpets; and, fourth, the pouring of the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth, from which there emerges the vision of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. The whole picture describes how the Holy Spirit, ("the seven spirits of God" in chapter 4), is at work today throughout the world through the progressive opening of the Word, bringing into the light the evils within and without, and operating unfalteringly to separate that which is "unjust and filthy from that which is righteous and holy." This is involved in the number seven-the sacred day of rest after labor. The Word opens with "man" in the garden of Men "naked and unashamed," and closes with "the Lamb that was slain" on the throne of heaven, and all the angels acclaiming Him worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength and honor, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever." The tree of life, also, in the centre of the garden of yore, at last appears in the centre of the Holy City in full fruitage. And the leaves of that tree-most blessed promise-are for the healing of the nations.

The Seven Churches

Chapter 1. John's revelation is addressed to those who love the Lord above all others. We can only appreciate the blessing of keeping this prophecy as it takes on a meaning that touches our ordinary lives. John's salutation to the churches is "to all who are in the Christian world, where the Word is, and the Lord is known by it," and who desire to be Christian in deed as well as in word. The Lord gives those born anew the power to know what is right and to do it; that is, make them kings and priests unto God. He reveals Himself in the literal and spiritual sense of the Word. Even those in falsities, (they who pierced Him), shall see Him in penitence, and look to Him for help to restore the life of religion in a cruel and faithless world. We face that world with our backs to the Lord, and condemn it unsparingly. That, however, does not improve matters. We need to face about, to see the truth that saves, and not condemns. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:17.) As this inversion of our state of mind takes place, we see the Son of man, or the Lord as the Word, in a new light. The written Word touches life on every plane even to the outward daily life. "The Son of man was clothed with a garment down to the foot." The Word conjoins us with heaven (the golden girdle), and disposes our thoughts to good purpose (the head and hairs white as wool). The new understanding of the Word reveals God's love more and more (eyes like a flame of fire), especially in the Lord's life in the Gospels (the feet as if glowing in a furnace). The Word has something to say about everything we know, and stresses the power in heavenly truths, (the voice of many waters and seven stars in his right hand). It separates the true from the false, and reveals the Love and Wisdom of the Lord. The vision prostrates us from a sense of our unworthiness. The Lord revives our spirit, and gives us to understand that He will preserve us from all evil. (P. 221-233.) The church in heaven is guardian of the church on earth.

2, 3. The weaknesses in each church may exist for rectification in any individual, or group of individuals. Ephesus—the opinionist. He is hard-headed, intolerant of evil, and quick to expose shams. He loses his first love for others, however, and will, therefore, cease to be a lightbearer, unless he repents, and recovers his good will to all. Smyrna—the altruist. He is tender-hearted, easily imposed upon, and led astray. He regards himself as God's chosen child, but his judgment is unbalanced. Wisdom is attainable only through trying self-discipline. Pergamos—the behaviorist. His actions are right in the main, but tainted with hypocrisy, or self-merit. The life is not clean, until the inside of the cup is as clean as the outside. Thyatira—the dogmatist. With him, orthodoxy takes precedence of love. He therefore falsifies the Word to justify violations of the law of love. Not until love rules supreme can his power over evil come with the dawn of a new and better day. Sardis—the pietist. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The little good in worship will cease to exist, unless we practice what we preach. With repentance rituals, like garments, are purified, and the name of being religious made good. Philadelphia—the balanced life. "Because they know that they have no ability of themselves," they have power from above to overcome evil from their youth up, and live a normal life. They are the pillars of the church, the trusted leaders in society. Laodicea—the inconstant life. Peter and Judas were warm when loyal to the Lord, but cold in their denial and betrayal. We are at least tempted to play fast and loose with the Lord, as it appears best for self-interest at the time. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." We must open the door and let Him in, to attain perfect self-mastery in the name of the Lord, to overcome all and sit with Him on his throne, even as He overcame, and sits with the Father on his throne.

The Seven Seals

4. Consider now the state of the world. The wickedness in sight is as nothing to the wickedness out of sight. That which is kept hidden by fear of consequences is beyond computation. All this evil, to the last ugly or mean thought, must be brought into the light, condemned and finally exterminated by the help of the Lord. We are now considering the means whereby the Lord works to this end without interfering with our freewill at any point. A door in heaven is opened, and we are invited to ascend, through humility, and see how the stage is set for the drama. Behold, a throne with the Lord upon it. The Lord operates perpetually to separate good from evil. Around the throne are twenty-four judges representing all that is good and true in the church in heaven and on earth. Out of the throne came lightnings, and thunder and voices—enlightenment, perception and instruction. And before the throne was a sea of glass, representing those at the limit of the Christian heaven about to be formed. The four animals in and around the throne represent the SOURCE of judgment, our affection for the power, the knowledge, the wisdom and the forethought in and from the Word of God, (a lion, calf, man and eagle). All ascribe the glory and honor to the Lord.

5. The MEANS of judgment is the Word itself. This is a sealed volume. No one in heaven or earth is able to open its meaning and "to know the states of life of all, and to judge everyone according to his state. The Lord alone sees the state of everyone from inmost to outmost," for time and eternity. There is solid comfort in knowing that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof," even the Lamb of God,—the Lord as to his Divine Human,—who is omnipotent and omniscient. And now that the Word is being opened and the judgment is in operation, there comes to the souls of men from the higher heavens, even though it be felt as yet only as the slightest tremor, the joyous confession of the Lord's Divine Human, with thoughts of faith springing from the desire for better living. It is a new song ringing with joy in contemplation of ultimate "deliverance from

hell, and salvation by conjunction" with the Lord for those "in the church, or in any religion," who live according to their light. The lower and the lowest heavens contribute their share of inspiration in acknowledging the power of the Lord "to execute judgment, and by it to reduce all things in the heavens and upon the earth to order." A transcendent Amen comes from the living Word, with humble adoration from all in heaven.

6. The first step in the judgment is to explore the minds of those who had passed into the spiritual world within the Christian era. In apostolic times the people remarked: "See these Christians how they love one another." When the will loves good, the understanding loves truth, and is quick to confirm it. Even so the rider controls the horse,—the understanding,—and has it take him where he wants to go. The early Christians understood the Word in its purity, and went forth to conquer evil. That is the significance of the white horse emerging on the opening of the first seal. On the opening of the second seal, there came forth a red horse. In the second period of the Christian Church, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, an evil understanding of the Word justified hatred in dealing with heretics. The rider on the red horse claimed the right "to take peace from the earth, that they should kill one another." The third period, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, was marked by a false understanding of the Word. The rider on the black horse had a balance in his hand. The church estimated the value of the Word of religion at a mere trifle. Faith alone was its standard. And that period was succeeded by naturalism, agnosticism, atheism, the denial of everything supernatural in religion. The rider on the pale horse was named Death, "and hell followed with him." "Every man has spiritual life, indeed, from creation, and thence from birth; but that life is extinguished, when God, the holiness of the Word, and eternal life, are denied." This state of the world throughout those centuries made it hard for a large mass of well-disposed people to get a clear concept of religion. They gathered together in the spiritual world, and are here spoken of as "the souls under the altar." With the opening of the fifth seal, they are said to have received white robes, signifying "genuine truths of wisdom," awaiting the fullness of time when they might be released. (See chap. 20.) The opening of the sixth seal brought into the light the state of life of those who appeared as Christians in external form, but were interiorly evil." Their hypocrisy was laid bare to their great consternation.

7. The first stage of the judgment is at an end. The Lord, however, provides that the stronger influx from heaven which is to follow shall be restrained until that which has already been under judgment has been freed altogether from further assault. God's servants are then sealed in their foreheads. The twelve tribes are named in four groups of three. The first of each tribe signifies some love which is of the will, the second something of wisdom, and the third some use, or effect, from them. After that all in the Christian world who are truly religious and hear the Lord's word acknowledge from the heart that the Lord is their Savior, and all in the entire heaven worship Him for ever. Reference is here made to the souls under the altar. Who are they? "They which came out of great tribulation." Their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, are emblems of their religious principles, cleansed by fighting against evils, and rejecting falsities. They live in the Lord's presence, and lack nothing. They have ceased to desire evil as formerly, and are taught of the Lord, who leads them "to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The Seven Trumpets

8. On the opening of the seventh seal, heaven was silent with astonishment. Self-love had long kept us blind to evil within and without. It is a shock to have our eyes opened and see things as they are. We pray for mercy, but God's love is made manifest through the exposure and removal of wrongs that are opposed to it. Almost everyone lives more or less under the delusion that God will be merciful and deliver him from all his sins for the asking. This doctrine of faith without works existed long before Luther formulated and adopted it. It is responsible for the growth of evil beyond measure. The next nine chapters deal with the exposure and judgment of this evil. The sound of the first trumpet lays open the state of religion with those who are interiorly in that faith, destroying good and falsifying the Word. The second trumpet affects those who are exteriorly infected by that doctrine, falsifying general truths, and vitiating knowledges from the Word. The third trumpet sound brings out how this belief heightens one's pride in abstract teachings of religion, and contempt for spiritual truths. The fourth trumpet discloses a decline in ability to know "what love is, what faith is, or any truth." These woes are light compared with the three that are to follow.

9. The fifth trumpet sounds. The learned and wise justify their belief in salvation by faith alone. A star falls from heaven and opens the abyss in which they live; for the confirmation of a falsity is the denial of the truth. Lusts burst forth unchecked, with sensuous judgments. Their power to persuade others was limited to those like themselves. It was tormenting, for they would never listen to reason themselves, and always regarded their arguments as irrefutable. They falsify the Scriptures with subtlety to stupify others to the destruction of religion. The sixth trumpet uncovers the weaknesses of the uneducated, who simply believe in faith alone, and do as they like. Being free from any restraint, their minds are crammed with visionary ideas that shut out the light and life of religion, which is to do good. When arguing for the right to do as they please they sometimes give utterance to great truths, but falsify them by a selfish interpretation of them. The confirmation of their evils is not so subtle, or so deep, as that of the learned. Their idols are more gross and repulsive, yet they are inaccessible to reason. "Faith alone induces in their hearts stupidity, fickleness, and hardness, so that they do not think anything of any sin that is to be shunned, because it is with the devil and against God."

10. The Lord Himself appeared in his Word with special reference to its testimony to Him as the God of heaven and earth. He is the centre of all religion, and deplores the decadence of his church, which is unprepared to receive Him, until the heart has rejected its dependence upon salvation by faith without works. After the judgment He will come as foretold in both the Old and New Testaments. John took the little book and ate it up to illustrate how the teaching in regard to the Lord as the God of heaven and earth would be received in the church. In his mouth it was sweet as honey, but bitter in his belly. The church will accept Him as its Savior agreeably, but demur when asked to acknowledge "that He alone is God of heaven and earth, and that his Human is Divine." Therefore, the exposure of the false beliefs that stand in the way must proceed, until we see and overcome all resentment in ourselves to correction, and make full reparation for the evils to which we are prone.

11. The angel gave John a measuring rod. To those who love the Lord is given the power to see and know the state of the church in heaven, or as it ought to be, "before it should be conjoined to the church in the world, the court which is without the temple." In the light of this the church here is desolated and destroyed by evil living. This will work its own ruin, and then open the way to a new beginning. Until then the acknowledgment of the Lord and a life according to the ten commandments shall be taught regardless of opposition. They are the two witnesses, two olive trees and two candlesticks. Whoever hurts them brings punishment upon himself, and falsifies the truths of the Word. "They who love to follow their

inclinations and are carried away by the enjoyments of their lusts" (the beast out of the abyss) reject them, even in the church itself. "The love of ruling from the love of self, and love of governing from the pride of one's own intelligence," (Sodom and Egypt), are the arch enemies of Christianity, (where also our Lord was crucified). We have nothing to do with the fate of anyone who expects "instantaneous salvation from mercy apart from means." (P. 338.) Nor can we judge anyone. But, it is of paramount importance that we should see what is implied by our indifference to evils within, and our sensitiveness to correction. We dare not reject "the two prophets that torment those that dwell upon the earth." They are the essentials of religion. When we see the situation within, and take it seriously, "the spirit of life from God enters into them," and the dead arise and stand upon their feet. There is trouble within. The true and the false stand in opposition, a great change takes place. At last we expect to pay the full price of salvation, give up our selfish life for the life eternal. The seventh angel sounds his trumpet. "The kingdoms of this world are become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign for ever and ever." The conflict is on again, and the judgment, "to destroy them that destroy the earth" in ourselves.

12. "The woman clothed with the sun" represents the new Christian ideal imbued with the love of God, that is, the desire to keep his commandments, and the faith that evil in ourselves can be overcome—"the moon under her feet." The Word assures us of victory—"the crown of stars." Our conception of the truth that convicts us of a definite sin matures with difficulty. The love of that evil is entrenched in the soul. We excuse, we procrastinate, we vacillate, we do everything to evade the issue. Our unregenerate sensuous nature—the serpent—is exceedingly cunning and seductive, in forming the most unsound excuses, even falsifying Scripture to break down our determination to face the issue. The child born to the woman signifies "truth conceived in the spiritual man and born in the natural." It is the truth about our besetting sin, seen in the light of the Word and by rational arguments. "The only thing by which man is man, and by which he is conjoined to the Lord, is that he can do good and believe truth from his will according to his judgment." The flesh is weak, however, and we are unable to make real our aspiration at once. Fortunately, we have opened the way for the Lord to work within. Heaven has drawn nearer, and the result of a conflict there becomes evident in our disposal of argument after argument favoring our evils, or our inability to cope with them. The dragon, that old serpent, is cast out into the earth—the world of spirits. "Now is come the salvation and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ." Our woes increase—the dragon persecutes the woman. The Lord protects his own. We see more within our evils, and are plagued with pessimism. The devil and Satan would have us believe that we can never get rid of our evils. Why attempt the impossible? The irrationality of pessimism becomes increasingly apparent. "The earth helped the woman." The serpent then shows its fangs—contempt of those who claim Power to do right in a world wherein evil reigns supreme. We stand firm on the confines of heaven. "I stood upon the sand of the sea."

13. "And I saw a beast coming tip out of the sea," and a second beast coming tip out of the earth. Both of these beasts had all power and authority from the dragon, and therefore represent "the doctrine and faith of the dragon among the laity and the clergy" respectively. The first beast had seven heads and a name of blasphemy on them. A belief in three gods, and in salvation without means is the product of an unsound mind. It derives its power from Scripture, though wholly false. It is blasphemous when it denies the Lord's Divine in his Human, or regards Him as a mere man. It is a dangerous heresy based on a misinterpretation of the Word. The Word insists that man is judged by his works and not by faith alone. How can it be possible that sin is no sin for those who have faith? That they are not bound by the moral law? That they are free? No one dare call their belief in question! Only believe, and your sins are forgiven! Heaven is yours for the asking! "The whole earth wondered after the beast," leading others away from a true belief, and from right living. They go together into captivity—in bondage to unrepented evils. "Here is

the patience and the faith of the saints," to feel the temptation to take the way of all flesh, in preference to the way of the cross, trusting in the mercy of the Lord. The beast from the earth had "two horns like a lamb, but spake as a dragon." The clergy "speak, teach and write from the Word, as if it were the Lord's Divine truth, and yet it is truth falsified." They entered more deeply into the faith. "They argued that no one can do a good work of himself, and fulfil the law," which is true, but falsified when said that Christ suffered in man's stead "and thereby took away the condemnation of the law." If you do not accept that faith you will perish! Faith is the only means of salvation! Orthodoxy is a sine qua non of religion! This takes all the good out of Christianity, letting down the race, instead of lifting it up.

14. We see it, and condemn it as intolerance and bigotry. With our judgments, new and better states of living are being formed by the Lord within. Christianity is forming. "And I saw, and behold a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written upon their foreheads." "The twelve" multiplied twelve thousand times! The nucleus of a new heaven from which shall come a new earth! New truths, a new perception, a new confession of the Lord, a new joy for the redeemed of the Lord! The proclamation of the everlasting gospel has a new ring to it that stimulates an interest in the Scriptures and in the worship of the Lord, free from pride and arrogance. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow with them." There is still much to be accomplished. The Lord will appear in the literal sense of the Word to execute further judgment, (a sharp sickle). Harvest time is near, the grapes and grain must be gathered in. and the grapes cast into the winepress and trodden without the city -- "Sodom and Egypt." All the ways in which the Christian Church has violated the Gospel must be brought into the light for final judgment.

The Seven Vials

15. "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." John saw this. They who love the Lord see what it means concerning judgment in themselves. The attendant suffering is "the wrath of God," because "man, from his evil, is angry against God," he resents reproof. The content of the vials is a revelation of unwelcome truth from the Lord. John saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire. This represents professing Christians who worship the Lord Jesus Christ outwardly, but themselves inwardly. In contrast are those who "stand by the sea of glass, and sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb," representing those who live according to the commandments, and believe in the Lord as their Creator and Redeemer, and as one with the Father. Their confession is expressed in the words of their songs, which opens heaven in the heart, in preparation for a judgment that achieves a final separation of the false from the true in Christian faith and life.

16. The seven vials of wrath depict the soul's rage when the genuine truth from the Word condemns the evils of life that have had a free hand in everyone who relies on God's free grace and pardon after death. The debt must be paid to "the last farthing." The first vial poured on the earth unveils the foulness of interior evils and falsities that infect the learned. The second, on the sea, shows the extinction of Divine truth by exterior evils and falsities in the masses. The third, on the rivers and fountains of waters, points out how faith alone perverts all the teachings of the Word, bringing condign punishment in its train. The fourth, on the sun, discloses how the Lord's Divine love is torture to "those who are in the lusts of evil from the enjoyment of the love of self." The fifth, on the throne of the beast and his kingdom; proves that where

faith alone reigns darkness prevails. The sixth, on the Euphrates, drying up its waters, makes it clear that every reason advanced to justify procrastination through mistaken trust in God is a denial of the Lord's power to save, and the failure of faith. An extension in the breakdown of faith means Armageddon—a world-conflict that menaces religion and civilization. "The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air." The air we breathe, the spirit of life, everything in which we have any faith! Can it be that we refuse to reflect upon the evils in ourselves? Refuse to face the facts about ourselves? That we separate faith from charity, and remain fixed in the enjoyment of our evils to the end of life? The issue raises a commotion within that is almost unendurable. And then the Lord concentrates our thoughts upon the root cause of our troubles. "Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath."

Babylon the Great

17. We finally establish a complete contact with the root of all evil, the love of rule from the love of self, or, simply the love of self. "It surpasses all other loves in its ability to adulterate goods and falsify truths; and it does this by a misuse of the rationality that every man, both the evil man and the good man, has from the Lord. By its proofs it can even make evil to appear wholly like good, and falsity like truth." (P. 233.) So long as we learn truth in the abstract which is in no way mixed with the evil of the will, there is no profanation of it. But whenever the truth we know checks an old selfish habit, and we resentfully excuse it, or attempt to prove that it is not so bad, or quite justifiable, that is essential whoredom and profanation. This is what is meant by one of the seven angels that had the seven vials showing John the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters, that is, if we, through hearts aflame with God's love, see the evil in our thoughts and intentions, and let it pass. Babylon is the great harlot; the Holy City is the Lamb's wife. The love of dominion is responsible for the greatest crimes, which are most offensive when committed in the name of religion. "Mystery" is her name. She does her work in secret, and not in the open. And "drunken with the blood of the martyrs," she is intolerant of opposition, even a slight difference of opinion in one who is disliked. She perverts all the teaching of the Word, when self will is ranged against God's will. There are many, however, who are not beyond conviction, when pushed to extremes. Outwardly, however, the world seems at present to be overwhelmed by the lust for power.

18. "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened by his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, Babylon the great is fallen, and is become the habitation of demons, and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." For the adulteration and profanation of the truths of the Word it works out its own ruin, which is more serious for those in authority than for their subordinates, or than for the outsider, or the common people. "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets." This does not mean that the saint shall triumph over the sinner. joy is inherent in deliverance from evil, as suffering is inseparable from sin. There does not appear to be any need of picturing the horrors attending the struggle for supremacy in church and state. History and current events are quite adequate to the demand. The world, however, stands badly in need of a clearer understanding of the inside. And this will undoubtedly follow the continuous opening of the Scriptures with the progressive effort on our part to know and do the will of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

19. "After these things I (that is, they who love the Lord) heard as it were a voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Alleluia, Salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God: for true and just are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, who corrupted the earth with her whoredoms, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." This is the beginning of the end—thanksgiving for the removal of a hateful selfish spirit, and the gift of freedom to love all men particularly those who stand in greatest need of it—the spirit of all in heaven. The Lord alone reigns within. "The marriage of the Lamb is come." "They who will be of the Lord's New Church are instructed by the Lord in genuine and pure truths through the Word," for the construction of a new social order "devoid of evil." (R. 814.) Blessed are they whose hearts are open to the call. The reality of the vision is so inspiring that we are tempted to worship the vision as and for the reality. The Divine, however, only exists in bearing testimony to the Lord in Christian living, in brotherly love. (John 5:39; 6:57, 63.) In the future the opening of the meaning of the Word will enable those who love the Lord to discriminate clearly the difference between right and wrong in all human relationships. "I, John, saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse," on which sat Him whose name is The Word of God. By "truths from the literal sense of the Word confirmed by rational arguments from the natural man" the Lord will lead us in the conflict with the enemies of the spiritual life—the love of dominion and faith alone. The invitation to participate in the blessings of the new life through conjunction with the Lord—the marriage supper of the Lamb—is extended to all who have seen the vision, and are prepared to sacrifice all to realize it.

20. We eat to live. Some of the food is assimilated almost immediately by the papillae of the tongue, and the esophagus, while most of it is more slowly taken up by the stomach and the intestines. So with those who congregated in the world of spirits during the first seventeen centuries of the Christian era. Some of them entered heaven soon after death. Others were detained longer to complete the process of separation of evil from good in its entirety. And still others were unable to be subjected to the process, until certain elements in the world of spirits were withdrawn, to make it possible for the light from the Word to reach them. So John speaks of the dragon being bound for a time, and cast into the abyss, when the souls under the altar were set free to face the light without fear or inordinate group pressure from without. The world of spirits in the eighteenth century was full of people from Christendom who were Christian in name only, and others externally associated with them who were truly Christian at heart. Light came from the opening of the spiritual sense of the Word of God, through the instrumentality of the Lord's servant Emanuel Swedenborg. That light was gladly hailed by weak Christians, while the influence of the dragonists was under restraint. After they were strengthened in their character the dragonists were permitted to bring all influence available to break down their faith, but without success. The evil was rejected, and the light perfected. And this is the order of the universal judgment. We are writing our books of life daily. Everything we think, intend, say, or do is imprinted on the interiors of the mind. Nothing is wanting or lost. And when we pass into the spiritual world the books are opened, and compared with the things in The Book of Life—the Lord's life in the Old and New Testaments. And wherever our books are found to be in agreement, everything that is out of harmony with that Life Divine is cast out to make it possible for us to feel at home with others in the Father's household, commonly called heaven.

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

21. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." John saw the vision objectively, and they who have the Lord's love in their hearts see it subjectively—a Christian heaven in the spiritual world, the source of the inspiration to establish a new order in this world ruled by the Lord Himself. A church or state that only

simulates a true religion or form of government, being rotten at the core, cannot stand. "I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The new order means a new freedom and a new life. It comes into existence as the evil in man is separated from the good. To this end—"for the sake of the Lord, the neighbor and salvation"—the Lord gives from Himself through the Word the knowledge of the truth that conduces to that use. "I will give unto him that thirsteth of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Thus, it was "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues" who shewed "the bride, the Lamb's wife" to John. From the Lord out of the inmost heaven they who desire to keep the ten commandments are led by the Lord to see the meaning of the law in their hearts, for judgment and for right living from day to day, from hour to hour, aye, at times, from minute to minute, when wicked thoughts are on the wing, that they may be conjoined to the Lord through his Word. (R. 669, 670, 718, 719, 895.) The objective is a new community life—a Holy City—with everything that is of evil without its walls. The new civilization will be built on the precious teachings of the Gospel, and perfected through obedience to the commandments. The names of the Apostles were on the foundation stones, and those of the tribes on the gates. The square deal is the rule of life on every plane of life. The integrity of the new Christianity will be determined by a settled trust in the Lord. The measure of the wall is the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The Lord Himself in his Divine Human is the all of the new order. The opportunity to enter into it is open to all for all time.

22. The end is in the beginning, and the beginning in the end; the fruit in the seed, and the seed in the fruit. And every least part of the tree has its special contribution to make toward the perpetual reproduction of leaf and fruit. The tree of life in the garden of Eden speaks of the growth in the infancy of the human race of the consciousness that "life for man is God in him, and that he then has heaven and eternal life." (M. 135.) Fruit and foliage on the tree of life exist only by implication in childhood. The period of the former prophets likens the man who shuns evils as sins against God to "a tree that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither." (Ps. 1.) The latter prophets present a more advanced form of its growth. (Ezek. 47.) Here the tree of life reaches its perfection. It is a central feature of the Holy City. It draws its sustenance from the river of the water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is in the midst of the street of the Holy City. It yields fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. In the inmost of the truths that make for the better regulation of our international, national and personal life is the Lord in his Divine Love. Every truth drawn from His Word will be productive of good according to the varying needs of every individual from time to time, (fruit for every month). The leaves of the tree signify "rational truths from the goods of love and charity by which they who are in evils and hence in falsities are led to think soundly, and to live becomingly." "Nothing accursed shall be there, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall minister unto Him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. These words are faithful and true." Mistake not the vision for the reality! "Blessed are they that DO his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Everything that has even the least suspicion of evil in it must be cast out that the Lord may dwell within, and that we may be his people. Does it seem to be impossible of realization in this godless world? "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen." The marriage covenant is sealed when the church answers: "Yea, come, Lord Jesus."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."