

THE SCHOOL OF CALVARY

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BOSTON

THE PILGRIM PRESS

LONDON

JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13 & 14 FLEET STREET

1910

232
J836

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I

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I

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"For to me to live is Christ."—PHIL. i. 21.

THERE are three cardinal words in the passage, "me," "live," "Christ." The middle term "live" is defined in the union of the two extremes. The two carbon electrodes of the arc-lamp are brought into relationship, and the result is a light of brilliant intensity. And these two terms "me" and "Christ" are brought into relationship, and there is revealed "the light of life," and I become "alive unto God." The human finds life in union with the divine. Now this is the only contact which justifies the usage of the term "life." Any other application of the word is illegitimate and degrading. The word "life" stands defined in the relationship of the apostle's words. But we

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take other extremes and combine them, and we name the resultant "life." "For me to live is money." Me—money! And we describe the union as "life." We are using a gloriously spacious and wealthy term to label a petty and superficial gratification, which is as transient and uncertain as the ephemera that dance through the feverish hour of a single summer's day. "For me to live is pleasure!" Me—pleasure! And we describe the union as "life." It is a mere sensation, having no more relationship to life in its reality than the sluggish and ill-defined existence of the *amœba* has to the large mental and spiritual exercises of the Apostle John. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." "For me to live is fame." Me—fame! And we describe the union as "life." It is a mere galvanised spasm, and is no more worthy of the regal term "life" than a will-o'-the-wisp is worthy of bearing the name of the sun. Of all these relationships we may employ the

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New Testament indictment and say, "Thou hast a name to *live* and art dead." All other combinations fail. By no other fellowships can we produce the resultant. Life is the unique product of a unique union. "This is life, to know Jesus." "For to me *to live* is Christ." Such was the rich and ineffable life of the Apostle Paul. Let us turn our thoughts upon it in prayerful meditation.

The first condition of real life is something to love, and the second condition is something to revere. For a living issue each of the elements is essential. Each deprived of the other is robbed of its dynamic. Neither can lift if the other be absent. Love without reverence becomes a purely carnal sentiment, and resides in the channels of the flesh. Reverence without love is like cold moonlight, and will never enrich the heart with the presence of gracious flowers. Love without reverence is a destructive fever; reverence without love is a perpetual frost. True love kneels in rever-

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ence; true reverence yearns in love. Each, I say, is essential to the other, and both are needful in the creation of worthy and wealthy life.

Now, where can love and reverence be best begotten? Where can we find the atmosphere most fitted for their creation? Where can we learn to love and revere in such a way that they shall become the spontaneous exercises of the soul? I sometimes take down from my bookshelves a little book of devotion written by a great mystic 300 years ago. I turn to Chapter X. of this book and read its quaint and engaging title: "Calvary is the true Academy of love." If I want a school where love is taught and revealed, I must seek the Academy of Calvary! The teaching is superlatively impressive, and even the dullest scholar makes progress in the school. Let me quote from my much-sought-after devotional guide: "The death and passion of our Lord is the gentlest, and at the same time the strongest motive which can animate our

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hearts in this mortal life ; and it is quite true that the mystical bees make their most excellent honey in the wounds of the lion of the tribe of Judah, who was killed, shattered and rent on Mount Calvary." It is a quaint and very suggestive figure. Out of death, which destroys all things, "has come forth the meat" of our consolation ; out of death, which is stronger than all things, "has come forth the sweetness " of the honey of our love. We are to be like bees, and we are to "make our excellent honey " in the wounds of the lion of the tribe of Judah. Or, to return to my writer's title-figure, we are to go into the Academy of Calvary, which is the all-excelling school of love. And what are we to do when we get there ? We are to employ the ministry of meditation. I care not how unpractical the counsel may seem in this busy, hurrying, breathless day. If we men and women are ever to attain unto life and make progress in its ways we have got to find time to go to school and learn. I think one of the

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cant phrases of our day is the familiar one by which we express our permanent want of time. We repeat it so often that by the very repetition we have deceived ourselves into believing it. It is never the supremely busy men who have got no time. So compact and systematic is the regulation of their day, that, whenever you make a demand upon them, they seem to be able to find additional corners to offer for unselfish service. I find that when I have comparatively little to pack into my portmanteau it seems as full as when I have much. The less we have to pack the more carelessly we pack it, and the portmanteau appears to be full. There is many a man who says he has no time, who proclaims his day to be full, but the fulness is the result of careless packing. I confess, as a minister, that the men to whom I most hopefully look for additional service are the busiest men. They are always willing to squeeze another item into their bulging portmanteau. But, even though our plea were legitimate, it

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our time were crowded, if the portmanteau were packed, if we cannot find a corner of the day for meditation in the school of Christ, then we must take something out and make room for it. I think if we search our bags we shall find many and many a rag which takes up space, but which is of very little worth, and which might very safely be banished. But if even all the contents were valuables, even assuming that they were pearls, the Master has declared that the secret of progressive living is to sacrifice the pearl of inferior value for the pearl of transcendent worth. Even assuming that the newspaper is not a rag, but a jewel, I do not think it wise to cram so many into the bag that there is no room for the book of Revelation, the title-deeds of "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." No, if we mean truly to "live," we have got to find time for the highest of all exercises, meditation upon the eternal things of God. We have to go to Calvary, the academy of love, and reverently

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contemplate the unveilings of redemptive grace. How many of the men in our congregations ever open their Bibles for private meditation from Monday morning to Saturday night? We give ourselves no opportunity. Love and reverence are not the uncertain products of chance. They are the sure and stately product of thought. If our thought be steadily directed love and reverence will follow in its train. Let us go then into the school of Calvary, with eyes and ears alert and quickened, that we may see and hear. We shall get into the secret places of the Most High, and we shall behold the marvellous unveilings of Infinite Love. We shall hear that wondrous evangel that Pascal heard, and which melted his heart, and hallowed all his years: "I love thee more ardently than thou hast loved thy sin." I cannot describe the tremendous impact which that sentence makes upon my life. I know how I have loved my sin. I know how I have clung to it. I know how I have yearned after it. I know what illicit pleasure I have

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found in it. I know how I have pursued it at any cost. And, now, in the school of Calvary, my Master takes up this, my so strenuous and over-whelming passion for sin, and contrasts it disparagingly with His passion for me : "*I love thee more than thou hast loved thy sin.*" If in some quiet moment that grand evangel swept through our souls in heavenly strains we should fall in love with the Lover, and our love would imply our entrance into eternal life. And as for reverence—no man can go softly and thoughtfully into the school of Calvary without falling upon his knees. He is awed by what he sees as well as by what he hears. "They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall, and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink." "And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads." "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." "Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over the land, until the ninth hour." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" "And when He had

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cried again with a loud voice, He yielded up the ghost." I say, go into that school—quietly, privately, and you will soon be on your knees! The old mystic is right—Calvary is *the* academy in which we may learn reverence and love. We are wooed by the vision into surrender and spiritual fellowship, and through the gracious ministries of purification and illumination we pass into perfected union with the Lord. Love and reverence for the Highest are the conditions of true life, and in love and reverence for the Lord we attain unto eternal life, and become partakers of the Divine nature. "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." "For to me *to live* is Christ."

Now, let no one suppose that this mystical union with Christ drives men into fruitless reveries and idle dreams. There is no one so practical, no one so splendidly energetic, as the advanced mystic. Why, even Dr. Johnson, who I think cannot be accused of effeminacy, or of any inclination towards a weak and watery sentiment, describes the mystical

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saints as characterised by "vigour and efficacy." And in truth, any one who knows the history of the saints knows that these are their pronounced public characteristics. They are vigorous; there is an optimistic robustness about their carriage. They are efficacious; their energy is directed to definite and practical ends. The Apostle Paul was a mystic. Read the middle chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, the whole of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and all the Epistle to the Colossians, and you will learn how profound and mystical was his union with the Lord. And was he practical? Was his life characterised by "vigour and efficacy"? Go straight from the fine, subtle, mystical thinking of the Epistle to the Romans to the busy, tumultuous doings of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will get your reply. John Tauler was a great mystic, one of the greatest of the mystics, living in profound union with the Lord. Was he practical? or was he a dreamer? Listen to this little extract

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from one of his writings: "If a man while devoutly engaged in prayer were called by some duty in the Providence of God to cease therefrom and cook a broth for some sick person, or any other such service, he should do so willingly and with great joy." There is a practical flavour about this man's mysticism. When the Black Death raged in Strasburg John Tauler disregarded the Interdict, and worked day and night among the plague-stricken people. Surely there is something vigorous and efficacious about this man's fellowship with his Lord! John Wesley was a mystic, led by the mystics into union with the risen Lord. For him to live was Christ! Did John Wesley pass his years in coloured reveries and dreams? Take the four volumes of his journal into your hands, and find the answer. John Wesley was the greatest English figure of the eighteenth century. We cannot survey the practical life of the century without meeting him at every turning. General Gordon was a mystic. His

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soldiers knew the meaning of the white handkerchief when it floated outside his tent, and the sacred privacy was not disturbed. Was he practical? The slums knew the sound of his feet, and the little waifs and strays found hospitality in the sunny rooms of his grace-blessed soul. In all these examples the mystical union with the Lord resulted in marvellously practical energy, which issued in multiplied services for the race. "For to me to live is Christ." "He that believeth on Me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water."

When "to live is Christ" everything is claimed for Him. Everything is sealed with the King's seal, and used for His exclusive glory. Said the saintly Bengel, "*Quicquid vivo Christum vivo.*" Whatever I live, I live Christ! Through whatever I am to live, I live Christ; I set upon everything the imprint of my Lord! Nothing is allowed to become an alien minister. No circumstance is allowed to raise the flag of revolt. Bengel made every circumstance in his life pay tribute

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to Christ. Let me quote a little extract from an exquisite little book of Thomas Boston's, a Scotch mystic, whose life was abounding in labours: "Learn that heavenly chemistry of extracting some spiritual thing out of earthly things. To this end endeavour after a heavenly frame, which will, as is recorded of the philosopher's stone, turn every metal into gold. When the soul is heavenly, it will even scrape jewels out of a dunghill." All of which just means that a man in Christ can make his adverse environment ideal. He can make his disappointments his ministers. He can make his adversities the King's witnesses. He can make his very bereavements glorify his Lord. Whatever he lives, he lives Christ! If he lives through a season of sorrow, he lives Christ. If he lives through a season of commercial ruin, he lives Christ. If his path take him past a grave, he lives Christ! For him to live is Christ.

II

"LOSE TO FIND"

II

“LOSE TO FIND”

“He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”—
MATT. x. 39.

THIS is surely a very extraordinary chapter. As its contents pass before us we are possessed by feelings of ever-heightening surprise. Here is Jesus, gathering about Him a little company of twelve men. No member of the little band belongs to the ranks of power, or culture, or wealth. They are all inconspicuous, many of them unlettered, the majority of them poor; it is just a company of working men standing nervously on the borders of an unfamiliar publicity. And now their Master is about to send them forth to proclaim and perpetuate His ministry. With what kind of programme will He inspire

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them? What glory of possibility will He set before them? What light will He place upon the distant horizon to cheer them in their mission? What will He say to kindle in the hearts of these timid toilers a burning and insatiable enthusiasm? When I turn to the programme, I wonder at the oppressiveness of the shadow. I wonder that the Master uses such black colours in depicting the coming day. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake." "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another." "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of me." I am amazed at the almost audacious candour of the programme. There is no hiding of the sharp flint, no softening of the shadow, no gilding of the cross. The hostilities bristle in naked obtrusiveness. Every garden is a prospective battlefield. "I am not come to send peace, but a

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sword.” The choice of the Christ involves a perpetual challenge to war.

Now, if this be the programme of the kingdom, what shall we do? What are we tempted to do? We are tempted to frame for ourselves a very perverted conception of the characteristics of a reasonable life. If our surroundings can be so hostile, if our difficulties can be so stupendous, if the hatred we may awake can be so intense, if we can call into being a mighty army of aliens, surely the policy dictated by a sane and healthy judgment will be this: Take the line of least resistance; keep your lips closed; go with the stream; look after yourself! This is the method of reasonableness! This is the policy which assures self-preservation! This is the secret of a successful and progressive life! Keep your lips closed—the policy of silence; go with the stream—the policy of opportunism; look after yourself—the policy of self-aggrandisement. Such is the counsel of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who strenuously urges upon me this threefold policy of

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silence, drifting and suction, if amid all these sleeping hostilities I would attain to a roomy and successful life.

Now, in the chapter before us the Master absolutely reverses the counsel. Not by the policy of the world shall we ever attain to self-preservation and enrichment; it is a policy which speedily and inevitably leads to impoverishment and self-destruction. The policy of the world leads to an apparent "finding": in reality it is a terrible "losing." Along these roads the apparent finder is the loser; the apparent loser is the winner. Let us proclaim the methods of the Lord. It is not by silence, but by expression that we win; "Whoever shall confess Me before men." It is not by drifting, but by endurance that we win; "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." It is not by self-aggrandisement but by self-sacrifice that we win; "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." This is the secret of Jesus; life is sustained and enriched by expression, by endurance, and by sacrifice.

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Let us now apply these principles of the Master to the individual life. Take the first—life is secured and enriched by expression. Apply the policy of silence to the domain of the feelings. Feelings which are never expressed languish away and die. It is equally true of the noble and the base. Refuse expression to an unworthy passion and we slay it by suffocation. Love that never tells its story, that never utters itself in word, or gift, or service, fades away into drowsy indifference. Sympathy that never becomes incarnate congeals into cold benumbment. Gratitude that never testifies soon ceases to be felt. Pursue the policy of silence in the matter of the sentiments, and we shall speedily be despoiled of our wealth. Our feelings require an outlet; they are oxygenated in speech. The price of retention is expression. We must give them out if we would keep them in. We must lose them if we would find them.

Apply the policy of silence to the acquisition of a truth. A truth that is

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never proclaimed is never really known. Truth reserves her rarest beauties for the moment when she is being shared. If we retain her we only see her partially ; if we give her away we see her " in new lights." In the moment of communication she reveals an unsuspected wealth. The teacher gains more knowledge while he is giving away what he knows. Truth is vivified in the very ministry of expression. " What I tell you in the ear, that proclaim ye upon the housetops!" Perhaps our Master intended to suggest that we never see the full glory of truth when we receive it ; the full glory will only break upon us when we proclaim it. Never tell the truth, and the truth will always remain dim ; proclaim it, and it will emerge from the mist in clear and most alluring outline. The price of retention is expression. We must lose if we would find.

Take the second of the principles given us by our Lord—the purposes of life are not served by the policy of drifting, but by the ministry of resistance. Life is

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energised by endurance. Drifting may be the secret of easy living ; it never discovers the entrance into a spacious life. To go with the stream may be a luxury, but it is a luxuriousness which is productive of a perilous enervation. We can never drift into any really worthy and permanent wealth. We can never drift into rest. The only people who never find rest are the idle and the indolent. The preparative to rest is labour, and rest only reveals its rich and essential flavours to those who have plodded the ways of toil. It is the men who have lost who find. Rest never visits the idle man, even though he have an easy chair in every room in the house. “Strive to enter into rest.” We can never drift into joy. The only people who are strangers to joy are the people who shirk every difficulty, and never contend with a troublesome task. It requires a little pressure even to get the juice out of a grape, and it does seem as though the fine juices of life are only tasted where there is a certain stress and

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strain, a certain pressure, a certain sense of burden and task. The precious juice of joy is never the perquisite of the drifter; it visits the lips of resistance and is the fruit of conquest. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"; that is the commanding issue of prolonged strife and resistance. We never drift into strength. Drifting makes no muscle; the muscle is impoverished. The man who drifts with the stream appears to be conserving his strength, while in reality the ease is just the measure of the leakage. It is the man who appears to be expending strength who is really gaining it; the man toiling at the oar and resisting the stream, he acquires the power of the stream he resists. The policy of drifting appears to find, but it loses; the policy of resistance and endurance appears to lose, but it grandly finds. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Take the third of the principles proclaimed by the Lord—it is not by the

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policy of self-aggrandisement that we can find the secrets of an enduring progress. Life is not enriched by selfishness but by sacrifice. Life only becomes fruitful when it becomes sacrificial. This is true concerning our influence upon one another. It seems ordained that life has to attain a certain fervour of sacrifice before it can become contagious and multiply itself throughout the race. On the cold planes of calculation and selfishness life is unimpressive, and its products leave the general life unmoved. It is even so with a poem, with a painting, with a sermon, ay! with a courtesy; the measure of its impressiveness is just the measure of the sacrifice of which it is the shrine. What is there in the poem of the heart, of energy, of blood? What has the man put into it? What did he lose in its making? What “virtue” has gone out of him? Just so much will be the measure of healing. Just what he lost will be our gain; he becomes fruitful where he touches sacrifice. But let us say more—the poet himself is the gainer

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by so much as he lost. The spirit of sacrifice not only impresses others, it fertilises self. In the fervent atmosphere of sacrifice buried seeds of possibility awake into life, which in an air of cold calculation remain in their graves—powers of perception, of resolution, of effort; in the tropical heat of sacrifice they spring into strength and beauty. I say, therefore, that the spirit of sacrifice enriches self while yet it fertilises others. Our giving is our getting. "With what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again." Here, then, are the gates to a rich and roomy individual life; not silence, but expression; not drifting, but endurance; not self-seeking, but sacrifice; for "he that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Now let me lift up the principles to a larger application. I have tried to reveal their relationship to the individual, but they are equally applicable to wider relationships—to families, to societies, to

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states, and to the Church. Let me confine this larger outlook to the life of the Church. Here is the Church of Christ placed in an environment of sleeping hostilities. If she move, her foes awake and arrange themselves in serried ranks. Here and there she meets with violent hatred, and everywhere she is confronted with gigantic tasks. The difficulties are here in our homeland, and they are multiplied in lands afar. What shall be our policy? We may not definitely formulate the policy, and by the very absence of a clear and strong decision we may be snared into the three perilous worldly policies of silence, drifting, and self-aggrandisement; a policy of silence, not proclaiming in every place the evangel which we have received; a policy of drifting, evading the enormous tasks and difficulties of the almost immeasurable field of service; a policy of self-aggrandisement, appropriating the ministries of grace to our own consolation, and sitting and singing ourselves “away to

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everlasting bliss." And here, again, is the word of the Saviour. By the methods of the world the Church will never gain her life. Life gained in such conditions is miserably delusive. The vitality is only apparent. The growth is dropsical. The finding is only a losing. The Church that would grow rich must externalise and invest its treasure. The Church that would live must die. If she would have her Olivet of enriched communion she must seek it by the way of Golgotha and the Cross. If she would gain she must lose. She must be a missionary Church, working out her salvation by the ministries of expression, endurance and sacrifice.

How would she gain? Turn again to our principles. The life of the Church is secured and enriched by expression. I do not think the Church ever discovers the manifold wealth of her evangel until she begins to proclaim it to the varied and manifold needs of the race. Its adaptability to diverse circumstances brings strange corroboration to its truth. It is

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even so on the plane of matter. On the material plane a scientific discoverer hungers for a multiplicity of tests. He longs to give his theory the trial of multiplied experiments. The larger and more varied the range the more illumined and assured becomes his conviction. And here is the evangel of the Christ. We can only apprehend it partially if we confine its application to our English needs. Set it in a different light, and it will reveal an unsuspected glory. Take it to India; bring it to bear upon the Hindoo; set it side by side with his sad and dreary religion; let the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ be seen in contrast with his own deity, inaccessible to human affection, or, indeed, to anything else; proclaim the duty and privilege of holiness amid conditions which give little emphasis to morals; do all this, and it requires but little imagination to see that our evangel will assume an undiscovered majesty and glory, which will warm and illumine the minds and hearts of its own heralds. Take

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it among the primitive islanders of the South Pacific ; take it among the keen and sinewy natives of Central Africa ; take it among the half-awake and conservative people of China ; take it among the alert, absorbent and prospecting Japanese ; and every new application will reveal a new adaptability of "the exceeding richness of His grace." We discover while we evangelise. Our torch emits new flame while we light the lamps of others. We get while we give. "He that findeth his life shall lose it ; he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Again, the principle is true in wider relationships. The life of the Church is energised and enriched by endurance. The difficulties of home and foreign missionary work are gigantic. No field has been discovered where the difficulty is absent. The line of least resistance is to remain at ease. But the path to ease is not the way to life. A difficulty should always be interpreted as an invitation. If the Church be healthy a great task

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will always be an allurements. For difficulties are only rightly interpreted when they are regarded as promises. Every difficulty contains prospective wealth. Break it open, and the wealth is yours ! We appropriate the strength of the enemy we vanquish. Overcome a difficulty, and its power henceforth enlists on our side. That is a grand evangel, having application both to individual and to common life. There are monster difficulties in China. Let the Christian Church overcome them, and the force of the monster difficulties is added to her strength. We are energised by our tasks. Our muscle is made by our resistances. And, therefore, you will find that the seasons of commanding difficulty have ever been the seasons of the Church's exuberant health. The strong negative has begotten a mighty affirmative. The forces of persecution have produced sterling muscle and inflexible resolve. Let us, therefore, look at difficulties as promises in the guise of tasks. They are

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treasure-houses presenting the appearance of bristling forts. Break them open, I say, and the treasure is yours. To dare is to win! "He that loseth his life shall find it."

And as for the third principle, only a word need be said. The life of the Church becomes fruitful when it becomes sacrificial. When the Church is easeful she loses the power to redeem. I remember the old story of Pope Innocent IV. and Thomas Aquinas, who were standing together as bags of treasure were being carried in through the gates of the Lateran. "You see," observed the Pope, with a smile, "the day is past when the Church could say, 'Silver and gold have I none!'" "Yes, Holy Father," was the saint's reply, "and the day is past when the Church could say to the lame man, 'Rise and walk!'" When the Church's life is lived on the plane of ease, and comfort, and bloodless service, she has no power to fertilise the dry and barren places of the earth.

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When the Church becomes sacrificial she becomes impressive. The sacrificial things in history are the influential things to-day. It is the men and the women who give away their being, the bleeding folk, who are our present inheritance. The woman who gave the two mites still works as a factor in the life of the race. Sir John Kelynge—have you ever heard of him?—the brutal, cynical justice who thrust John Bunyan for twelve years into Bedford gaol, his very name is now a conundrum! John Bunyan, the sacrificial martyr, is still fertilising the field of common life with energies of rich inspiration. The finders have lost. The apparent losers are at the winning post! The sacrificial are the triumphant. “They loved not their lives unto the death, and they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.” A sacrificial Church would speedily conquer the world! “He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

III

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

III

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ."—2 COR. i. 5.

AND that word "sufferings," when used by the Apostle Paul, is not a big term to express a very little thing. "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." And still later in the same letter we have another glimpse of the apostle in suffering. "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death oft, of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I

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have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And yet, in the very midst of this tumultuous narrative, like birdsong in a thunderstorm, there rises this melodious assurance—"As the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ."

It is a strange conjunction this of "suffering" and "comfort." And it is all the more strange when they are put together in the relations of cause and effect, and comfort emerges from suffering as springs have been loosened by the earthquake at Messina, as volcanic influences are productive of conditions which feed the most luxurious vines. But apostolic teaching is also the teaching of

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common experience. Apart altogether from the Christian revelation men have learned that affliction and consolation, suffering and blessedness, are not alien and mutually repellent, but related by affinities vital and profound. Even Positivism, which is just a vast scheme of benevolence comprehending every form of sentient life, and which aims at universal blessedness, "decks itself out in the blood-stained garment of Christian asceticism," and in order to gain happiness employs the ministry of sacrifice. One of the primary precepts or principles of Positivism is just this—either suffer or die!

But the teaching which links the volcano and the vine, the earthquake and the springs, suffering and blessedness, affliction and emancipation, is pre-eminently significant of the Christian religion. It found its symbol of life in the minister of apparent death. Its emblem of victory is a cross, and its ascending transitions are crucifixions. It fashions its glories out of seeming shame, as the loveliest hues are

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extracted from the blackest pitch. It has only one path into life—a strait gate and a narrow way: it has only one secret of joyful liberty—self-sacrifice and vigilant self-restraint. “If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” We can only obtain the wine of life through the crushing of the grapes. Affliction introduces us to the juices and the mannas. “For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ.”

And so let us turn our minds in quiet meditation upon those “sufferings of Christ” in whose fellowship we are to find our consolation. And let us first of all remind ourselves of the words in which our Lord described His holy purpose and ministry:—“He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them

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that are bruised." Such is the range and richness of our Lord's redemptive mission. Now the range of our possible sufferings is determined by the largeness and nobility of our aims. It is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows by the cultivation of an insignificant life. Indeed, if it be a man's ambition to avoid the troubles of life the receipt is perfectly simple:—let him shed his ambitions in every direction, let him cut the wings of every soaring purpose, and let him assiduously cultivate a little life, with the fewest correspondences and relations. By this means a whole continent of afflictions will be escaped and will remain unknown. Cultivate negations, and large tracts of the universe will cease to exist. For instance, cultivate deafness, and you are saved from the horrors of discords. Cultivate blindness, and you are saved from the assault of the ugly. Stupefy a sense, and you shut out a world. And therefore it is literally true that if you want to get through the world with the smallest trouble you must

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reduce yourself to the smallest compass. And indeed, that is why so many people, and even so many professedly Christian people, get through life so easily, and with a minimum acquaintance with tribulation. It is because they have reduced their souls to a minimum, that their course through the years is not so much the transit of a man as the passage of an amœba. They have no finely organised nervous system, or they have deadened and arrested the growth of one nerve after another, they have cut the sensitive wires which bind the individual to the race, and they are cosily self-contained, and the shuddering sorrow of the world never disturbs their seclusion. Tiny souls can dodge through life; bigger souls are blocked on every side.

As soon, therefore, as a man begins to enlarge his life his resistances are multiplied. Let a man tear out of his soul the petty selfish purpose and enthrone a world-purpose, the Christ-purpose, and his sufferings will be increased on every side.

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Every addition to spiritual ambition widens the exposure of the soul, and sharpens its perception of the world's infirmity and the sense of its own restraints. How then was it with that vast spiritual ambition of the Saviour which He Himself described in words which I have quoted from the gospel by Luke? That all-absorbing redemptive purpose was bound to introduce Him to ceaseless suffering.

First of all, there were the sufferings which were incident to the very existence of a majestic purpose. Vast ambitions are not kept burning in the soul without fuel. They suck the very energies of the body into their own flame. Fine passion makes a heavy drain upon the nerves; the suburbs are scoured to feed the fire at the centre. There is not a man or woman of holy Christian passion in England to-day who is not "burning the candle at both ends." They cannot help it. And the consequence is they experience the sufferings which are incident to the limitations of the flesh. The body is too

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frail for the fiery spirit. The steed is exhausted while the driver is quite fresh. And therefore do these passionate hearts suffer in the imprisonment of their own physical restraints. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened!" And do you wonder, as you read the record of the sacred life, that you come upon significant words like these:—"And Jesus, being wearied, sat thus by the well." "And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." May I say it reverently—it was the tired-out body, the exhausted minister which carried the holy, passionate redemptive purpose of God.

And secondly, there were His sufferings which were incident to the passive antagonism of the indifferent. I mention these before I mention the antagonism of His positive foes because I think they inflict a deeper wound. The fiery crusader can meet an active opponent and overthrow him, but what can he do with the indifferent who have not a spark of concern?

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If you are passionate about anything the indifference of others will make you wonder : if it is a moral enthusiasm the indifference will give you pain. "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?" That is the cry of a wounded spirit. They would not even turn aside to glance at the pearl of great price ! I think there is no crucifixion for the spiritually chivalrous man equal to that which is inflicted by the unconcern of those whom he seeks to redeem. There is one sentence in James Gilmour's diary which was surely written in blood. It was written after years of labour. "In the shape of converts I have seen no result. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even *wanted* to be a Christian." And that was the experience of a man who, when he arrived at his field of labour, had written these words in his diary :—"Several huts in sight ! When shall I be able to speak to the people ? O Lord, suggest by the Spirit how I should come among them, and guide me in gaining the language, and in

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preparing myself to teach the life and love of Christ Jesus!" . . . "I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even wanted to be a Christian." Surely that was "the fellowship of His sufferings!"

And, thirdly, there were His sufferings which were incident to the active antagonism of his foes. There were the sufferings occasioned by passivity, but there are also the sufferings occasioned by hostility. One man has no interest in your message, the other listens and rejects. One man scarcely lifts his eyes to look at you: "so was it in the days of Noah!" The other stands up to you and declares you have a devil. Your aims are distorted, your spirit is misinterpreted; you are said to be wearing a stolen livery, assuming a benevolent purpose while you are seeking your own ends. And so it was with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Hostilities were multiplied. "He was despised and

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rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Now all these sufferings are sufferings which we can partially share with our Lord. There are other of His sufferings, mysterious and awful, of which we may know little or nothing.

"We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear."

Those secrets are yet enfolded in gross darkness; and all that we at present know is this—that out of the darkness, as from black subterranean depths, there flows "a river of water of life, clear as crystal," medicinal, strong in gracious healing, and carrying the virtuous energies of moral and spiritual transformation. There is something here which we can never share. "It is finished." But the other sufferings I named we must and we shall share, if we share the largeness of His purpose, and in our own degree seek the moral and spiritual redemption of the race. There is a space left for your energies and mine, and therefore for your

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sufferings and mine: we can "fill up that which is lacking of the affliction of Christ."

And now, for one moment, I turn the matter round. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ." If we have fellowship in the one we shall have fellowship in the other. I have already said that if we lessened our lives we should lessen our sorrows. It is now needful to add that if we lessen our lives we also lessen our joys. Deaden the sense of hearing and you escape the discords, but you also lose the harmonies. Drug your artistic sense, and you lose the pain of the ugly, but you also lose the inspiration of the lovely. If by the enlargement of my life I let in human sorrow I also let in divine consolation. A big, holy purpose makes me more sensitive toward the sin and hostility of man, but it also makes me more sensitive toward God. If the sufferings abound, "so our comfort aboundeth also." If I said

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nothing more than this, this alone would suffice: if we suffer with Christ, Christ Himself becomes a great reality. When life is a picnic we play with theology: when life becomes a campaign we grope for a religion. It is one thing sounding when your boat is in the open sea: it is another thing sounding when the menacing rocks are on every side. When we suffer with Christ we come to know Christ, to come face to face with reality, and the idle superfluities drop away. "And our comfort also aboundeth through Christ." Our fellowship with His sorrows makes us receptive of His joys; "My joy shall be in you, and your joy shall be full." Our fellowship in His battles makes us receptive of His peace; "My peace I give unto you." There is no surer way of becoming sure of Christ than to follow the way of sacrificial life and service. It may bring us into a fiery furnace of suffering, but "in the midst of the fire" there shall be one "like unto the Son of God."

IV
THE NEGLECTED CUP

IV

THE NEGLECTED CUP

"The fellowship of His sufferings."—PHIL. iii. 12.

LET us continue our meditation on "the fellowship of His sufferings." The phrase is taken from the eager speech of a veteran apostle! One would have felt its fitness and congeniality upon the lips of a young man, some fresh, enthusiastic knight, with his armour just newly belted about him, and setting out from the threshold upon some crusade of valorous enterprise. In such conditions this strenuous speech would have been congenial, and there would have been nothing startling in its proclamation—"I set out" that I may know Him, and "the fellowship of His sufferings!" But old men speak naturally of retirement, their fighting days are over, and they leave the

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stern encounter to the younger men. They often speak of having earned their rest, and the blazing ambitions of their earlier days have become cool. They no longer covet the "hardness" of the battle-field; they steal through the green pastures and by the still waters in the soft light of the setting sun. But here is an old man, with all the impetuous ambitions of his prime. His burning zeal makes even the enthusiasm of young Timothy seem dim, and he contends with the foremost of the youths for the hottest parts of the field. He is in prison now, but he is like some stabled hunter which hears the cry of the hounds. He is as tense and eager as ever. His ambitions are a young man's ambitions: his very speech is a young man's speech; his metaphors and similes are just those which leap most readily to the lips of youth; they are sought, not from sleeping boats in the harbour, or from quiet flocks in the meadows, but from the straining, strenuous worlds of the racecourse, the amphi-

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theatre, and the gymnasium. And so here he is, in the very van of the Lord's hosts, in the very fighting line, ambitious to share with his Lord the central hardships of the strife. "That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings."

"The *fellowship* of His sufferings!" That is a great New Testament word, and especially is it one of the great, determining words in the speech of the Apostle Paul. Let us enter into its wealth through this little gate which I find in the Acts of the Apostles. "And they had all things *in common*." The little phrase "in common" is closely akin to the word "fellowship," and by the help of the one we may gain a clear interpretation of the other. "They had all things in common": they had a common room and a common table, and they all shared alike in the abundance or impoverishment of the feast. And so, too, there is a table at which our Master sits, spread with the things which He

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and His have to eat and drink. And we, too, may have "all things in common" with Him: nay, it is the high sign and seal of discipleship that we do sit with Him at the common board. But here is our frequent mistake, that we regard that table as laden only with welcome provisions, and even with delicate and dainty luxuries. On that table there is the provision of peace, and the provision of joy, and the provision of glory! And over all the table, from end to end of it, there is the soft and healing light of grace. That is how we think of the table, and, blessed be God! all these rare provisions are surely to be found at the feast, and we may have all these things "in common" with the Lord. But there is also another cup upon the table, a cup that is very near the Master's hand, a cup which we very frequently forget or ignore. It is a bitter cup, the cup of the Lord's sufferings. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" Are we prepared to have "*all* things in common"? We

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drink the cup of kindness, the overflowing cup of redeeming grace. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" Now, it was upon that cup that the aged apostle fixed his covetous eyes, the cup that was nearest his Saviour's hand, the cup of bitterness and woe. "I have tasted," I think I hear him say, "I have tasted and seen how gracious He is; I have drunk the cup of His salvation, but I thirst for a deeper communion still; not only the sweet and palatable cup, but that dark and bitter cup would I taste; that cup whose contents are as blood. I would have 'all things in common'! 'I count all things but loss . . . that I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.'"

Now our intimacy with the Lord can best be estimated by our knowledge of the contents of that bitter cup. Other things upon the table have their significance, and to taste them argues a certain measure of acquaintance with the King; but the deeper significance gathers about

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that cup of darker hue. The quality of our fellowship with the Lord is best revealed, not by our capacity for joy, but by our capacity for suffering. We often test our communion with the Lord by the measure of our equanimity. If our life is calm and passive, and the wrinkles are absent from our brow, and we can sing, "Peace, perfect peace!" then we assume that our intimacy with the Lord must be very deep and true. But equanimity is a virtue very much misunderstood, and its popular representative is often only a well-disguised indifference. "Peace" is often used to label undignified and worldly ease, and as such it denotes no sort of fellowship with the Lord. There is an equanimity which is death. We do not reveal our high spiritual kinship by our ability to remain unruffled, but by our capacity to be stirred. It is when life is upheaved to its depths that we know the Lord, it is when deep calleth unto deep that we have the conditions of vital communion. And so it is not by

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our pleasures but by our pangs that we may discover our likeness to the Lord. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" That is the cup we forget, and yet it is in the cup of suffering that we attain the finest and rarest spiritual communion. And yet how far from this is the common reasoning! We say one to another, "Have you found peace?"—and if an affirmative answer be returned, we give glory to God; and well we may, for to have drunk the cup of spiritual peace is a sure witness that we are found at the table of the Lord. But how far has our fellowship advanced? How rarely we ask one another, "Have you become a partaker of the sufferings of Christ? Have you lifted that cup to your lips? And if so, when and how and where did you taste the bitter draught?" I am afraid that if we were subjected to these most searching questions the majority of us would have to confess that we had kept our eyes upon the other parts of the table, and that we had

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confined ourselves to the sparkling and welcome draughts of spiritual delight. But it is a shallow intimacy which confines itself to the pleasures of the table; the deeper discipleship lays hold of the darker cup, and enters into "the fellowship of His sufferings."

Now what is there in that much neglected cup? What is the bitterness which we can have in common with the Lord? What darker experiences can we share with Him? Nay, what is it we must share before we are kinsmen worthy of the name? Well, no one can be long in the presence of the Saviour without noticing that He always drank a bitter cup when He came into the presence of sin. The prevailing sin *hurt* Him, it crucified His spirit long before it crucified His flesh. Here is Jerusalem, wicked, wayward and indifferent, wasting its hallowed treasure in decorated debauchery. And the Master gazes upon its unholy pleasures and shames, and He weeps! Have we entered into the fellowship of that suffering?

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Have we tasted that cup? Or have we been so fascinated by the glittering decoration as to be oblivious to the debauchery? Let us look at the Master again, as He lifts to His lips the bitter cup. "And Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground." Can you feel what is going on there? Have you never listened to a questionable or unclean story, and, even while it was being told, for very shame you have not known where to fix your modest eyes? "And Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground." He was, at that very moment, drinking the bitter cup, and when we share His burning shame we enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings." But how few there are who share it! We are interested in sin, we can lift our eyes in delighted inquisitiveness, we can follow its unclean track down column after column of reeking print, and we never hurl the record away in weeping and consuming shame. Sin attracts us, it does not blister us; it interests, it does not burn. We can gaze

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upon it in curious observation, and it does not create an emotional convulsion. We can see it and laugh, we can see it and sleep. The Master saw it and wept. What a discord is to a refined and disciplined ear, so, in immeasurably deeper degree, should sin be to the intimate companions of Christ. What a coarse daub is to a well-trained and interpreting eye, so should sin be to eyes that have been anointed with the eye-salve of grace. The sin of the city should make all true Christians smart. But does it? Do we suffer with our suffering Lord? Or is that a cup whose bitter draught we have not drunk? Have you ever marked that word in the Book of Ezra, when that sensitive soul had discovered the sin of his people? "I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God: and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee!" The suppliant and his Lord were just then drinking out of the same cup. But how frequently in our life the shame is missing,

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and the blush is absent, and there is no suffering, no pain! And therefore it is that because there is no pain at sin there is no haste to remove it. We are slow-footed because we are slow to burn. Our feet will become "like hinds' feet" when there is a burning shame in our souls, and when we taste the unutterable bitterness of all sin. We shall be swift in the ways and ministries of redemption when we have entered into "the fellowship of His sufferings."

And that cup again! What else can we share, if our Saviour and we are to have "all things in common"? We cannot be long with the Lord without noting how deeply He suffered with the sufferings of others. Other folk's sorrows He made His own, and He drank deeply of everybody's bitter cup. Have we entered into the fellowship of those sufferings? You may possibly reply, "I've got enough of my own!" Yes, and that is perhaps the very reason why you have so many! Personal sorrows, selfishly nursed, become more

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burdensome by the nursing. Many times have I known a personal grief nursed into an intolerable load. "I've got enough of my own!" So we have, and more than enough; but if we made other folk's sorrows our own as well, the miracle would happen which has been wrought in innumerable lives, the double load would be more tolerable than either of the single loads, and the yoke would become easy and the burden light. At any rate, when we add the fire of another man's suffering to our own, there is One in the fire "like unto the Son of Man," and in that strong controlling Presence "the fire shall not kindle upon thee to destroy." And at any rate again, when we sorrow with another's sorrow we are drinking the cup of the Lord, and we enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings."

We can drink that cup of sympathetic suffering in silence. It does not inevitably demand the clumsy instrument of speech. I remember a saintly woman telling me some time ago how she had gone to call

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upon another woman, over whose life there had suddenly fallen the cold shadow of a benumbing grief. "I just held her hand, and said nothing, and we both wept!" And when our visitor told me the story I called to mind how, when those premonitory symptoms occurred which periodically threatened mental darkness to Mary Lamb, she and her brother, Charles Lamb, would go in the early morning, or in the late night, speechless and weeping, over the desolate way that led to the asylum. They said nothing to each other, they just walked the gloomy way, hand in hand. I care little just now what his creed was; I say that when Charles Lamb gave his sorely afflicted sister the hand of a silent but bleeding sympathy he was lifting to his lips the bitter goblet from the table of his Lord, he entered into "the fellowship of His sufferings."

Now I think we are born with an adequate equipment for sharing the sufferings of our fellows. Our very birthright includes a sensitiveness to another's

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woes. A little child instinctively discerns the shadow, and its tears fall in ready sympathy. But as we grow older we trifle with this precious inheritance. We waste our substance. We pervert and prostitute our emotional wealth. We are moved, but we do not move; we have a gracious impulse, but we give it no way; and what happens? The waters of unfulfilled emotion congeal into frost, and the very ministers of intended service become the friends of a severer alienation. That is the peril of novels; they excite an emotion which frequently reacts in petrifying power. And that is the peril of theatres. And that is the peril of sermons! And that is the peril of grace! "It is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." Aye, in these high places of emotion fire can become frost, and the emotion which does not issue in practical ministry freezes and binds the very life in which it was born. And so we leave our childhood behind, our endowment becomes our bane, we cease to be able to enter into the

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sufferings of Christ, and the Saviour suffers alone. But "blessed are they that mourn," who have not lost their capacity of a weeping and helpful sympathy. Aye, thrice blessed are they who in their prime retain the heart of a little child, who can weep with them that weep, who tread the winepress with the Saviour and enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings."

And, lastly, in this apostolic ambition to have all things in common we can enter into the fellowship of our Saviour's sufferings by the all-complete surrender of ourselves to the service of our fellow-men. Our Lord served other people to the point of physical weakness and exhaustion, and even unto death. Our service too frequently ends where blood-letting begins. We stop short of the promise of fertility. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Yes, and the blood of the servant fertilises the field of his service. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood!" And it is just at that point of resistance that we begin to win. It is just when our

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service becomes costly that it begins to pay. Life becomes contagious when it becomes sacrificial. Our work begins to tell when the workman is content to suffer, when he persists even unto blood. But is it not true that for many of us our service ends just when we reach the bitter cup? "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink of?" No, we are not able, and when our work and service become bitter we give it up. "From that day"—Calvary in sight—"many of His disciples turned back, and walked no more with Him." That teacher in the school—where is he now? Oh, he got tired of it! Which just means that he was not able to go on when to go on drew blood; he could not enter into "the fellowship of the sufferings." And that is our pitiable mood. So long as there is no drain we can persist: when there is a demand for the veins to be opened we retire. And so we miss the best of the feast. For they who take into their hands the goblet of bitterness, humbly saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from

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me : nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done," will find that by that bitter draught they attain into a spiritual kinship and companionship which is infinite compensation, and even in their sorrow and weariness "the joy of the Lord is their strength." And so just one word from old Samuel Rutherford, from a letter he wrote to John Kennedy: "Ye contracted with Christ, I hope, when first ye began to follow Him, that ye would bear His cross. Fulfil your part of the contract with patience, and break not to Jesus Christ. . . . Be honest, brother, in your bargaining with Him. . . . Forward, brother, and lose not your grips. . . . In the strength of Jesus, despatch your business!"

V

THROUGH GETHSEMANE TO OLIVET

F

THROUGH GETHSEMANE TO OLIVET

"Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of Him."—**MATT. XX. 20.**

"**THEN** came"! And what was the particular time which was assumed to be so favourable to the quest? What was the psychological moment? What says the context, for the context so frequently sheds a lurid or interpreting light upon the text? "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way He said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to

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scourge, and to crucify ; and the third day He shall be raised up." The narrative is darkening into twilight and night ; the heavens are becoming overspread and there loom the approaching presences of betrayal and condemnation and crucifixion. Surely, in such awful midnight, all petty and frivolous thought will be upheaved as by the convulsions of an earthquake ! Surely, all trifling purposes will be enlarged by a solemn wonder ! Surely, all hot and feverish ambition will be cooled and transfigured into sacred pity and awe ! " Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons . . . asking a certain thing of Him." In the moment of austere sorrow private ambition became obtrusive ! We must not assume that these men and their mother had been unimpressed by the Master's sad and mysterious speech. I would rather assume that they have shared the general depression, and have been subdued into tender seriousness and tears. But would not the assumption make the

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association altogether violent and unnatural? Natural or unnatural, I find many interpreting analogies in my own experience. It is amazing how speedily a settled temper can stain through a new impression and obliterate it. It is marvellous with what strength a dominant purpose can break through a temporary emotion and subdue and destroy it. How often laughter walks just at the heels of tears! How frequently frivolity pitches its tents in the very precincts of the sanctuary! It is almost incredible what subjects men can discuss when they are returning from a funeral. We gaze into a cold grave, and the wells of emotion are all at the flow, but within thirty minutes our thoughts have regained detachment, and our speech is busy with private or public affairs. Our minds and hearts can be deeply ploughed by the sharp, powerful share of public worship, but, almost before we reach the doors of the sanctuary, the drifting sands of the world are about us again, and the furrows are filled and

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obscured. I am not launching an indictment ; I am only illustrating an apparently violent conjunction. The old association has its modern analogies, and I am therefore not surprised that this sad and burdensome saying of the Lord should be immediately linked with the request of selfish and vaunting ambition. "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons . . . asking a certain thing of Him."

Now, who were the petitioners ? Matthew records that the petition was offered by the mother. In the Gospel of Mark, James and John are reported as making the appeal. The probability is that all three engaged in the supplication, and what one seemed to lack in urgency was supplied by the others. It does not require a fanciful imagination to recreate some of the preliminary conditions which preceded this open request. The incident here narrated is the culmination of a plot ; it is the efflorescence of assiduous culture. Behind this public stage there are domestic

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conspiracies which it is not difficult to recall. Salome and her two sons, James and John, have often discussed the sons' prospects in the coming kingdom, and many a time, at the end of a day's fellowship with the Master, they have sat late into the night, and even to the cock-crow, considering eligible places in the new dominion. "You are not half pushing enough," said Salome to her brawny fisherman sons: "your hesitancy will be your undoing! Your silence will be misinterpreted, your very reserve will be counted as indifference! Hangers-back will be regarded as hangers-on, and in the day of dignities you will be nowhere near the throne! There's Peter, now, he is never far away from the front, and I've seen the Master cast many a favouring eye upon him! And Nathanael, too, seems to be deep in His confidence, for often have I marked them in long and serious conversation! Judas has even received preliminary office, for already he has been appointed treasurer to

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the growing band! And then there's Matthew, a skilled man of affairs, with expert understanding of many things, and versed in the ways and mysteries of government! There are a dozen available men, and available offices will not be plentiful, and men like Judas will lose nothing for the asking. Pluck up, my sons, and assert your eagerness!" And so these two sons often retired to rest, with purpose matured, with their decision made, and they fell asleep dreaming of principalities and powers and exalted offices next to a throne. But in the cooler morning reserve returned, and the flowing purpose congealed again into rigid reluctance. And I cannot but think that oftentimes they sought to throw the task upon their mother, urging that such a request would come with far more force from her. "No one can compete with your influence," they said: "you are sister to Mary, His mother, and you can reckon upon her support, and you can prefer the claims of blood!" And so, day

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after day, the conversation would be renewed, and day after day the petition was delayed. But now Jerusalem was coming into sight, the centre of sovereignty and power, where the throne would be established, and the Master's face was set so steadfastly towards it. "It must be now or never," said Salome, "and it shall be now!" "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons, worshipping Him, and asking a certain thing of Him. And He saith unto her, What wouldst thou? She saith unto Him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy kingdom."

And, now, let us reverently note the yearning pathos of the Saviour's reply. "And Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask!" There is little or no rebuke in speech or tone. There is no indignant retort that they are asking amiss; there is only a graciously tender answer that they do not know the content of their own request. He assumes that

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what they are seeking is near companionship in His sovereignty, and very gently He intimates that they cannot have counted the cost. "Ye ask for sovereignty alongside me, that ye might share in my dominion; ye know not what is involved in such sovereignty: ye know not what ye ask! Ye think ye are asking for a garden, but in reality ye are asking for a battlefield, for my gardens are just transformed battlefields, and every owner of a garden has been a warrior on the field. Ye know not what ye ask!"

That is the principle of the Master's teaching. Men ask for exalted summits, as though they were the immediate gift of the Saviour's hand, and they are reached by hard and toilsome roads. The teaching is illustrated upon many planes of desire, apart from the distinctly religious. "Grant that I may stand upon Mount Olivet, my feet resting at the very secret place of its uplifted and radiant splendour!" Ye know not what ye ask: the

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fatigue, the toil, the danger, which characterise the road that leads to it. "Grant that I may have the wondrously facile skill of some great instrumentalist, that with perfect ease I may weave and fashion rich and moving harmonies! Let me sit upon the throne of the musical world!" Ye know not what ye ask! the sleepless vigilance, the uncheered rehearsals, the aching drill and discipline; musical sovereignties are reached by very obscure and toilsome stairs. It is not otherwise when we reason in the realm of the spiritual. "Grant that we may sit with Thee on Thy throne!" In this high region dignities are not doled, nor are laurels distributed to every caller at the gate. In the army of the Lord promotion is not by patronage: it is the gracious heritage of fidelity. We do not wing our way to crowns and sovereignties; step by step we trudge to them. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler." "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom."

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“Ye know not what ye ask!” Ye are seeking for sovereignties—for moral conquests, for spiritual dominions, for some splendid royalty of the soul: “Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” “Between you and a share in the sovereign glories of my kingdom there is a cup to be drunk; are ye able?” Our Saviour is using a very familiar figure in this of the cup, for a man’s cup was just the essential nature of the man’s particular lot. A man’s cup might be sweet or bitter, good or ill, seized and quaffed with ready delight or drunk with sad reluctance. “Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over!” And that is a cup we all covet to share. But these are not the draughts that form the mighty cordials of the soul, and endow it with spiritual force and sovereignty. “Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” Can you share my present lot, my sacrifice in thought, in prayer, in compassion and service? Will you share a night upon the hill in

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ceaseless intercession? Will you weep with me in Gethsemane, and bear upon your burdened hearts the sins and sorrows of the world. Will you enter into the bitter lots of others, and share their unwelcome draught? You ask for a conquest: well, then, are you ready for a crusade? That is the clarion call of the Lord. We are not called to easy sovereignties but to glorious campaigns. That is one of the primary significances of the emblems which lie upon the table at the Lord's Supper. They are the memorials of a superlative sacrifice—a life broken, and spent, and laid down for the redemption of the race. They are the emblems of a glorious inspiration, the emblems of a glorified life that is for ever sacrificed, ever willing to spend itself to restore and glorify mankind. And they are the mysteries and symbols of a magnificent calling, dumb mouths appealing to men to give themselves to a great crusade. For can we look at His broken body, broken in service, and then scheme

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and scheme to keep our skins entire and save them from being worn and broken in the hard and jagged way of service? And can we gaze upon "the blood of the new covenant," the blood so freely shed, and then immure ourselves in slippered ease, and never shed a drop of our heart's blood for the uplifting of the children of men? It is to young men that I would appeal, and by God's help I would put speech into the dumb mouths of the emblems: it is a young Saviour—only thirty-three when He was crucified—it is "the young Prince of Glory" appealing to the young men, and in the broken bread claiming their bodies, even though they may be broken in the enterprise, and claiming their very blood, that they, too, may bleed in the holy service.

"Ye know not what ye ask!" How frequently we share these uninformed petitions! We, too, are asking for sum-mits, and the Lord answers our prayer, but it is so unlike the answer we expected, for we find ourselves in heavy and burden-

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some roads: but these are the first-fruits of grace, for they mark the road that leads to the heights. I asked the gardener for a finer hedge, closer in texture, a vesture without raggedness—no hole, no rent or seam. And O, what mutilations followed the request, what clippings, what bleedings, what apparent waste! A finer hedge had to be gained through the ministry of sacrifice. You ask your Lord for sovereign joy. You know not what you ask. Deeper joy is the issue of deeper refinement; and so, instead of immediate joy, the Lord led you into the discipline of severity, that the chords of your soul might be rendered more sensitive, that so to their more delicate responsiveness there might be given more exquisite delight. You asked for sovereign beauty, spiritual beauty; you asked that "the beauty of the Lord" might be upon you. You know not what you asked; for between you and that sovereignty there lies Gethsemane, with its exhausting but beautifying ministries of intercessory prayer and sacrifice. You

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are asking for heaven, for a sovereign
abode in the seats of the blest. You know
not what you ask !

“ They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain ! ”

Heaven is the abode of the sacrificial, the
gathering place of crusaders ; the secret
of heaven's glory is to be found in the
glorious characters we have fashioned on
the way.

And so the gist of it all is this : thrones
are for those who are fit to sit on them ;
we arrive at our throne when we are ready
to rule. Sovereignties come to us in
grace and sacrifice. It is well to lift our
eyes to the hills, to the sublime human
sovereignties which fill the vision in
the sacred word, and then in the
strength of God's blessed grace and love
set out for the difficult climb. For
we have not to wait for our Lord's com-
panionship until we reach a throne ; He
is with us while we are aspiring to it. He
does not wait the warrior's arrival when

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the battle is over and won ; He is with us on the field. Our companionship does not begin at the summit ; it begins at the base. It is an interchange of cups from the start, "I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

The sons of Zebedee came to the throne, but by ways of which they had never dreamed. "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." . . . "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of!" James scaled his sovereignty by the bloody slopes of martyrdom. As for John, the evening of his days was a stormy and blood-red sunset, spent in the pains of an exile sustained by the inexpressible fellowship of his Lord.

VI

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD

VI

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD

THE Lord's Supper is a permanent memorial of Calvary. It is purposed to keep a stupendous sacrifice in mind, and to prevent it becoming a neglected commonplace. It is a lowly gateway into a most mysterious place. In its wonderful precincts there is unthinkable bitterness of sorrow. And yet out of the very bitterness there comes sweet bread for the soul. There are tears in its silences, and there is also "joy unspeakable and full of glory." How, then, shall we come to the feast?

Sometimes we have come to the Lord's Supper as though it were a battle-ground, and we have forgotten the feast. We have come as noisy controversialists, and not as hungry guests. We have con-

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tended for spiritual privileges which we have not used. We have been heated, quarrelsome, defiant, and we have gone unblessed away. And ministers have sometimes been so ensnared by the administrative part of the office that they have altogether forgotten that they were sinners. They have "administered," but they have not received, and when they have left the table there has been no holy glow about their souls, and no taste in their mouth of "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

How, then, shall we come to the feast? Let us come as *impure suppliants*. There is no room here to boast of personal merits, but abundance of room to sing the wonders of redeeming grace. This is no place to exhibit webs of our own weaving; it is rather a place of exchange, where we lay down our defective garments and humbly receive "the best robe" in the Father's house, even "the robe of righteousness and the garment of salvation." The most elaborate garment of the self-made

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man looks very drab and seedy when set in the light which shines around the table of the Lord. The best thing we can do is to say nothing about our own clothes, but humbly seek that "wedding garment," which is the gift of the Lord of the feast. "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with apparel. . . . So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the angel of the Lord stood by."

How shall we come to the feast? Let us come as *sickly disciples*, whose obedience has been thin and faint. We have been anæmic in His service. There has been an obtrusive want of rich, red blood, and the curious, quizzing world has seen the lack, and has wondered whether we were real kinsmen of the warrior with the "red apparel," or whether our claim is a presumptuous pretence. The only authorised

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Alpine rope has a red worsted strand running through it from end to end. And the really sealed followers of the Lord are known by their red strand, the blood sign, the red, endless line of sacrifice. A life which shows the wan colour of a selfish worldliness, which has nothing to distinguish it from the children of mammon, cannot claim moral kinship with the Lord who "laid down His life for His friends." We need the red strand. "My blood is drink indeed." We come to the table in order that our sickly anæmia may be changed into strong and sacrificial chivalry.

"We lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be!"

And so we come as *unimpressive weaklings*, who in ourselves are devoid of forceful grip, and who lack the splendid virile influence of contagious health. We have too frequently moved about our work as though we had "received the spirit

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of bondage again to fear," and were strangers to the spirit of "love and of power and of a sound mind." And therefore devils have not trembled when we drew near, and when we have commanded their expulsion they have remained powerful and enthroned. They have laughed at our approach, and had we carefully listened we might have heard the old challenge: "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?" The "voice of the great Eternal" was not in our tone, and so the evil spirit proved himself stronger than the professed disciples of the Lord, and we could not cast him out. And now we come for the bread of strengthening. And this holy bread, this bread of tears, this bread of affliction, is the food of giants. It endows the soul with "the power of His resurrection," and it transforms the ineffective weakling into a strong son of God, and perfectly equips him as a minister of salvation. We have come from defeat and failure up many a pilgrim road, and from many a clime,

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and we are now in the guest-chamber, where the gracious Host is accustomed to meet weary and disheartened pilgrims, and where He graciously feeds them with "the finest of the wheat."

"Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again!"

And what will He do with us? What will He do for us? What will He do in us? Well, first of all He will *commune* with us. He will whisper again to our hearts the wondrous consolations of the fourteenth of John. He will deliver us from our distraction, and He will smooth out all wrinkling and wasteful cares. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid!" Have we not experienced this quieting ministry of the feast? Have we not known the gracious seasons when the real life-forces have begun to move, and the soul has begun to kindle, and the envious distractions of the world have melted away, just as the imprisoning ice

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loosens its grasp in the genial breath of the spring? "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way?"

And thus, while He communes He will communicate, and the communication is so marvellously abounding and complete that we become incorporate with the Lord. The fifteenth of John shall follow the fourteenth; and when the separating fears and sins have been washed away and we are clean we shall know ourselves to be engrafted into the Vine of life. And no figure of speech, be it never so intimate, can express the closeness of the incorporation. Friendship, be it endowed with feelers and tendrils most exquisite, leaves half the tale untold. Even wedded bliss, when the union seems fleckless and indissoluble, only dimly reflects the fellowship of the soul and Christ. The Apostle Paul ransacked human experience for symbols of correspondence and intimacy; but even when he had used the best and most expressive he laid down his pen in utter

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impotence, despairing ever to shadow forth the marvellous kinship of the soul whose life is "hid with Christ in God."

And how shall we go away from the feast? We must go *as heralds*. We must "proclaim the Lord's death till He come." The Lord's death! We must go out to vagrant pilgrims, who are painfully following illicit lights, and becoming more and more confused, and we must lead them to this strange, solemn birthplace of eternal life and light and hope. We must "proclaim the Lord's death!" We must tell our struggling fellows that in that fertile gloom guilt finds its solvent, tears become translucent, and moral infirmity begins to "leap as a hart." Yes, we must leave the table as heralds, and this must be our cry: "O, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

And we must go *as covenanters*. We have taken "the new covenant" in His

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blood, and the holy sacrament will be fresh upon our lips. And there must be something about us akin to the Scottish covenanters when they emerged from Greyfriars churchyard, having entered into holy bond and covenant with the Lord. There must be something in our very demeanour telling the world that we have been at a great tryst, and our lives must be gravely, grandly quiet, confident in the glorious Ally with whom the covenant has been made. There must be nothing dubious in our stride. Our courage must be kingly, as though we have imperial friendships, and as though in very truth we "walk with God." It must be apparent to everybody, in the home, and in the market, and in the street, that we, too, have been "brought again from the dead, . . . through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

As heralds we must go, and as covenanters, and as *crusaders* too. We must leave the table as the covenanted knights left King Arthur's table, "to ride

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abroad, redressing human wrong," and to labour for the creation of conditions like unto those whose fair pattern we have seen in the mount. We may test the reality of our communion by the vigour of our crusades. We must drink our politics "from the breasts of the Gospel." There is a great word in one of Kingsley's letters which was written when the condition of the people was burdening him with its ever-deepening tragedy, and when his spirit was being tortured with the sense of accumulated degradations. And this is what he wrote: "If I have not had the communion at church to-day to tell me that Jesus *does* reign, I should have blasphemed in my heart, I think, and said, 'The devil is king!'" But he left the feast, he assures us, braced and strengthened, and with "a wild longing to do something for his fellow men!" That is it, the power of the holy blood must be proved in our positive action upon the kingdom of the night.

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"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar,
Who follows in His train ? "

And so let us turn to our feast. The door is open and the King is near, and blessed are all they that love His appearing. Let all human ministries veil their faces and stand aside, and let the soul have undistracted dealings with the Lord.

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THE MORNING GLORY

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VII

THE MORNING GLORY

"He is risen."—MATT. xxviii. 6.

AND what a sunrise this was after these dark days of disaster and hopeless defeat! It was "like some sweet summer morning after a night of pain." Love had been weeping amid the fallen leaves of her own tender hopes. All her joys were silenced like the songs of wounded birds. Love had been peacefully anticipating the coming of an endless summer, and lo! here was winter, in dark and merciless severity! The great Lover had seemed to be the very fountain of life, with quickening vitality which nothing could destroy, and yet the fountain had been choked up in Gethsemane and Calvary! "We trusted that it had been He who should have

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redeemed Israel," but the shining, welcoming pool proved to be only a mirage, hope withered in disillusionment, and the brutal majesty of material force held the entire field.

And so all the disciples were in a mood of deepest and darkest depression. The light had been cut off from their minds. They were in the dark. The taste had gone out of their lives. Everything had become stale and profitless. Simon Peter was gloomy with despondency and haggard with remorse. Two disciples were walking in the twilight to Emmaus, "looking sad," communing about the awful and sudden eclipse in which their hopes had been so miserably quenched. In every life the light was out. Mary Magdalene started at the "early dawn" to carry spices to the grave, but there was no dawning in her spirit, and the roadway was wet with her tears. Even in the heart of the Magdalene there was no vigil burning, like uncertain candle in a dark and gusty night. No one was anxiously watching on the third day, with

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eyes intently fixed upon a mysterious east. No; death reigned, and wickedness, and hopelessness, and no one was looking for the morning!

And then came the cry, "He is risen!" "The Lord is alive!" His tomb is empty! He has shaken off death and its cerements, and He has marched out of the grave! Think of that trumpet note pealing through the late night. Think of that great burning light streaming through the darkness, kindling life after life into blazing hope again—now the Magdalene, now Peter, now John, now the two journeying to Emmaus, now Thomas, until the entire disciple band was a circle of light again. It was an almost unspeakable revolution. "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light!" "The Lord is risen indeed!"

Now what did the apostles find in the resurrection which made them give it this weighty and unfailing emphasis? What was its practical significance? What did it mean? First of all, it meant this, that

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Jesus of Nazareth had been clearly manifested to be the Son of God. Before this wonderful morning the disciples had been the victims of uncertainty, chilled by cloudy moods of doubt and fear. But with the resurrection the uncertainty ends. It is not only that the immediate darkness passes, but the troublesome mists are lifted as well, and the Master emerges as the clearly-manifested Son of God. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!"

Now it is with that trumpet note that St. Paul begins his great letter to the Romans. It is well to remember this, because the letter to the Romans is largely concerned with sin and the guilt of sin, and with the sacred ministry of emancipation from its stain and power. And yet, on the very threshold of this mighty book, it is the eternal Sonship of the Lord which is proclaimed, and this in association with the fact of His resurrection from the dead. Here is the big-lettered placard we meet as soon as we address ourselves to travel

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this fine and bracing mountain road: "Jesus Christ . . . declared with power to be the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead." Not, you will notice, "declared to be the Son of God with power"; the power belongs to the declaration, the proclamation, the trumpet. Before the Easter morn the trumpet had seemed to the apostles to give an uncertain sound; there was either a trembling in its notes or a trembling in their ears, but now with the resurrection all uncertainty had gone, and the trumpet rang out its glorious blast, firm and rich and clear. "Declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead!"

What else did it mean? *In the power of the resurrection the apostles saw a vast reservoir of spiritual energy for the quickening and emancipation of the race.* This was their reasoning and their faith, that the Lord, who had emerged from the grave, and had thereby vanquished death, had the power to vanquish all death, whether

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it enthroned itself in body, mind or soul. This was their faith, as this was their evangel, that in Christ we, too, can rise out of death into newness of life, that just as He walked out of that tomb we too can walk out of the grave and graveyard of our own corrupt past, and in vigour and sweetness of being become alive unto God.

“ I hold it true with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things ! ”

Ay, but those lines omit the evangel. It is true that man can take his own dead self, and stand upon it, and use it as a step into a larger life of blessedness and sacrifice, but the energy wherewith to rise upon the dead self is only to be found in “ the power of the resurrection.” That is Paul’s gospel, and there is no other. We rise with Christ, we are risen with Christ. Because of the Lord’s Easter-morn we may pass out of our three days of death and corruption, and may rise to the

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"higher things," and have our own Easter-tide "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That is what the apostles found in the resurrection, vitality enough to quicken all the dead, whether the corruption be in body or in soul. "In Christ shall all be made alive."

And surely we have a wonderful symbolism of all this in the mystic movements of the spring-time. If anyone would be besieged by suggestions of the resurrection, let him look about in garden and in field and he will see the quickening glory. Spring is ever a gracious time to me. Never do I so intensely feel the pressure of the quickening Spirit as when I see the black hedgerows bursting with their flooding life into green and tender leaf. Never do I so realise the surging, encompassing energy of God's resurrecting Presence. I can pray with more intimate and eager communion, when the dominion of winter is breaking, and the time of the singing of birds is come. "In Christ shall all be made alive!"

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I would have the resurrection power flow into my dead affections, and make them bud in tender sympathies, and gentle courtesies, and all the exquisite graces of the heart of my Lord. And I would have the resurrection power pervade my dead conscience, and make it act with hallowed sensitiveness, with fine scrupulous feeling of the sacred and the profane. And I would have the resurrection power possess my mind, and make it fertile in noble ideals, in holy purpose, and in chivalrous resolution. Wherever there is death where there ought to be life, let there come an Easter dawning and the spring-tide of our God. And that possibility is just the apostolic evangel, and it is born in the light and joy of the resurrection of our Lord. Again and again I would say, "In Christ shall all be made alive!" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." "Because He lives, we shall live also!"

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And lastly, to the early apostles the resurrection had this further significance, *that in it right was manifested as the ultimate might*. It had seemed to the apostles as though the truth had been defeated, that it had been overwhelmed by hordes of wickedness, and that amid the laughter and ribaldry of its foes it had sunk in complete and final disaster. But on the Easter morn the truth emerged again. It snapped the cerements of the grave, and reappeared almost before the laughter of the enemy had ceased. "Vain the stone, the watch, the seal!" "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again!" I say that the apostles laid hold of this as one of the primary significances of the resurrection, the vital tenacity of the truth, the indestructibility of the right, its sure and certain resurrection. If we cannot permanently bury the Christ, we cannot permanently bury the Christ-like; if One emerged from His temporary grave, so assuredly will the other. Right is the ultimate might, and all the forces of hell

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cannot gainsay it. It may seem at times as though truth is a frail and fragile creature, a tender presence in a tempestuous day, and men may take her, and scourge her, and crucify her, and bury her in a sealed and guarded grave; but, as surely as right is right, and God is God, that buried frailty shall reappear in invincible majesty, and shall incontestably dominate and command the affairs of men. That is apostolic teaching; and, therefore, written in this faith we have that wonderful ending to Paul's great resurrection chapter in his letter to the Corinthians. Have we marked its culmination? "Wherefore," he says, in the closing verse, when he has just taunted the beaten forces of death and the grave, and sang anew the praises of the Lord, "wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" Do we mark the force of the succession? He seems to say, "Your Lord emerged from the grave in irresistible

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strength and glory. There were no bonds strong enough to hold Him. He broke them all like tender threads. There was no grave mighty enough to imprison the truth; all the stones were rolled away! So shall it be with the truth in our life and service. It shall not go under in endless defeat. Our strength shall not be spent for nought, precious water easily spilt upon the ground. Every bit of truth shall live, every bit of chivalrous service shall abide for ever." "Wherefore, be ye steadfast, unmoveable;" go on living the truth, speaking and doing the truth, even though immediate circumstances crush you like a juggernaut—go on—there is resurrection power in the truth, and it shall reappear and surely conquer, and your labour shall "not be in vain in the Lord." And so it is true, what we learned in childhood, for the Easter morn confirms it, "Kind words can never die, no, never die!" And so it is true what is said by Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Truth gets well if she is run over by a locomotive,

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while error dies if she scratches her
finger."

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers,
But error wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies amid her worshippers."

"He is risen!" And in our Lord's resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of all that shares His nature.

BRADBURY AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

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