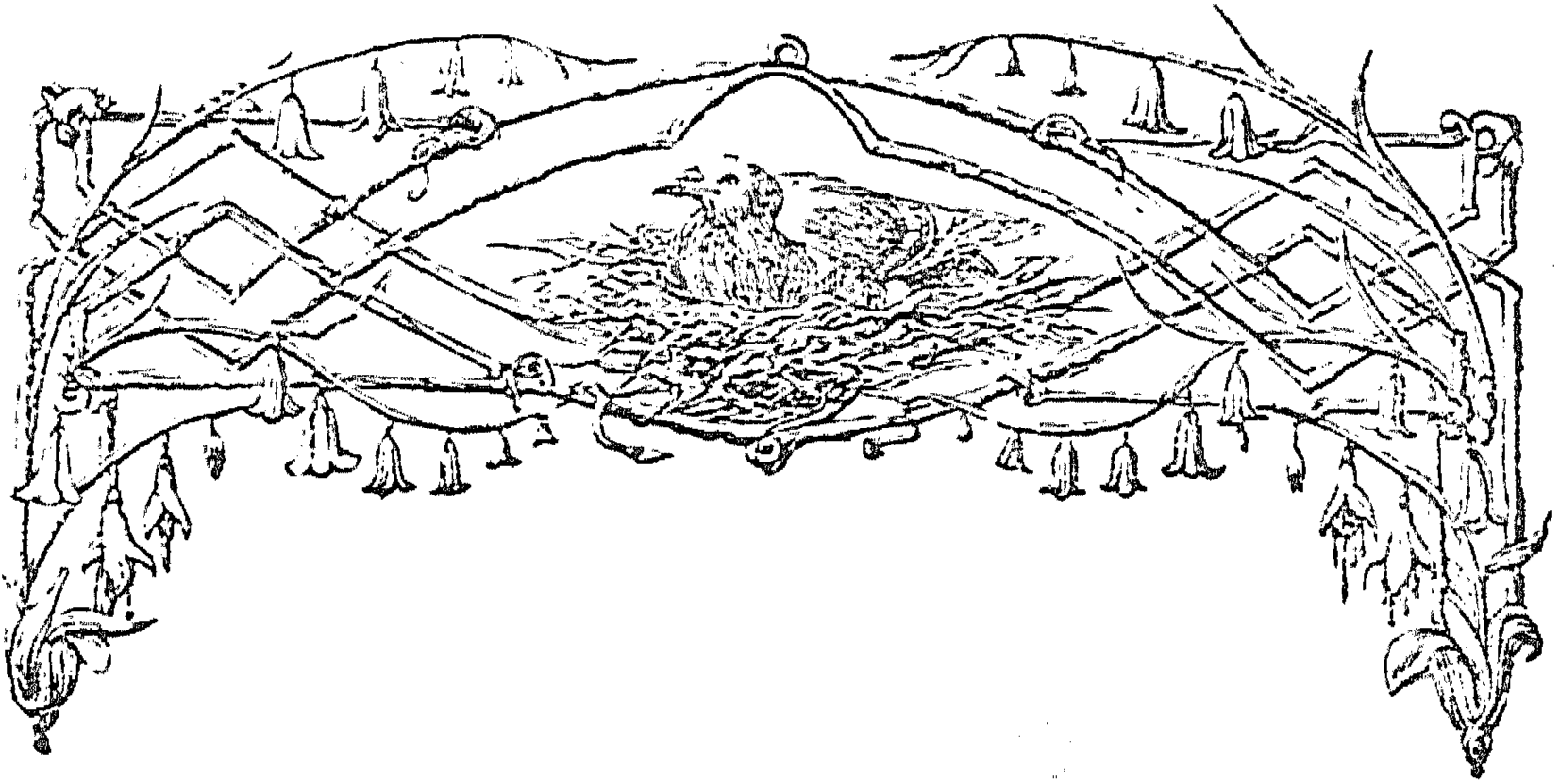


a community called ...

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GO OUT OF YOURSELVES!

BY REV. W. M. STATHAM.

LIVING *in* yourself alone is as miserable thing as living *to* yourself alone. We all need something higher than ourselves to lean upon, to trust in, to love; and this is very beautifully expressed by the Psalmist when he says, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Yes, higher, not only than the "high," as it concerns myself, but as it is representative of humanity every-where.

Man is a dependent being; he cannot stand alone. The vine is not more scattered and spoiled without support; the clematis is not more helpless without a staff to lean its weight upon.

Man was made to lean upon God. Every thing within him needs God for its life and blessedness. His conscience needs God's light, his judgment needs God's guidance, his affection needs God's love. Without God, man is weak and miserable; he may throw out feelers for other supports, but the cement of every earthly wall gives way, and nothing but the strong granite of the Rock of Ages can bear his weight. "Give me God!" is the cry of the soul of man. "O that I knew where I might find him!" The peculiarity of the Hebrew civilization was this constant recognition of God; their constitution was a Theocracy. Their family

education, their jurisprudence, their whole national history, manifested a divine dependence pervading their life. Every thing in their history said, "Man must go out of himself," and the sacrifices pointed the way to that Saviour by whom we may all come unto the Father, led to the Great Rock by the Spirit, the Comforter.

The mistake of humanity is to seek happiness and strength in *self*. "Go out of self, indeed! Not I," says the weak, erring, selfish heart; "not if I know it." And then comes that desperate endeavor to be happy without God. Impiety takes the form of selfishness; for be it remembered, that if the glutton feeds the animal selfishness, planning while he is eating to-day for the luscious dishes of the morrow; if the money lover feeds the accumulating selfishness which "delights to count the stores;"

so the man who tries to do without a Redeemer-God, feeds the pride of his own heart with a moral self-satisfaction concerning what he has been and what he has done. But the sincerely earnest and devout find, at some period or other, that self-dependence breaks down, and "Lead me to a Being higher than myself" becomes the deep utterance of the soul.

But this, rightly interpreted, is the language also of man's common life. What a life this is! What innumerable wants it contains! What mysteries lie within and around us! Divinely gracious are the arrangements for its satisfaction. There is human love—the child-heart reposing on the parental rock—and, verily, for the time being a sure and strong place of repose it is, made beautiful, too, by the clinging of the child-love.

Then comes the love of youth and espousals. Bride and bridegroom travel together in life's short pilgrimage, in faith and truth; it seems to satisfy the heart, and it is the nearest thing on earth to heaven. It has been chosen by inspiration as the divine picture of Christ's love to his Church.

But this, and all kinds and degrees of human love, fail to satisfy the soul; they soon have branches growing over the wall, lopping down on the other side. There is a great void still. What are we to do? Man is the staff on which woman leans. Woman is the more perfect complement of man's nature, in the truest sense his better half; but both of them are human, both are finite. You can see the top of the rock, and in time look over and beyond it; even in the noblest experiences of human life there comes the cry, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than

I"—higher than man's poor nature can ever be.

Then, too, there is human judgment. We take counsel of each other, and that is well. Age is more experienced than youth, education is a better guide than ignorance: the lawyer can counsel his client, the physician can counsel his patient, the tutor can counsel his scholar, the father can counsel his child. But man only sees a little way—a very, very little way. There are paths to be trodden, temptations to be avoided, duties to be undertaken—concerning which the human oracles are silent. It is wisest on many occasions for humanity to be dumb. But God has a secret pavilion into which the righteous enter; within the closed doors of their Father's chamber they can talk with him. One whose hands were pierced, and who was wounded and bruised for them.

leads them to the Father. That oracle is never dumb. He guides with his counsel, he is an instructor of the ignorant. He walks with the Abrahams and the Enochs among the sons of men. Well may the great heart of man, finding and feeling the insufficiency of all human love, say, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

Thus to go out of ourselves is our first duty in relation to God; and the next step in the Christian life is to go out of ourselves in relation to others. Imagine St. John and St. Paul ever occupied in analyzing their own spiritual state, or merely ministering to their own temporal or spiritual comfort. No! the great Exemplar had taught them a better lesson; for even Christ pleased not himself. He went about doing good, and even the high joys of his own celestial kingdom he wished his disciples to share. He

did not say, "I go to the glory whence I came; I return to the throne of my heavenly state:" but, "I go to prepare a place for you."

The man who lives to himself alone has ill learned the alphabet of Christianity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is the second great commandment, and it has never been repealed. How many suffer *ennui* and nervousness and misery from living in such confinement; they are always living in the cell of their own selfishness; and it would do them a world of good to take a little exercise on the common land outside, where their friends and neighbors need their sympathy and help. To the question, "How do you do?" some might answer with truth, "Only middling! I have been pampering self, until self, like a school-boy who has eaten all his cake sily in his own bedroom, feels generally uncomfortable."

“And how do *you* do?”

“Well, I’m getting worse; I’m worrying a good deal; I’m thinking what *may* take place, and I have thought of such a lot of things that my appetite’s nearly gone.”

“And how do *you* do?”

“Well, my feelings are very sensitive, and if I’m at all neglected or slighted, and if I’m not properly consulted about things, and if people about me don’t always act with deference to me, it grieves me, and I feel bad for days.”

“And how do *you* do?”

“Well, thank you, friend, I’m as hungry as a hunter. I’ve been giving a lecture at the Mill-street Mission School, and my eldest boy has been working the dissolving views for them; and after our hard work, and the cheers and thanks of the

poor people, we want our supper, I can tell you."

"And how are you?"

"Why, thank God, never better. My eldest girl made some jelly for the little cripple in Brook Cottage, just over the village green. And we've been there for a walk together, and, coming home, we met our Bobby and mamma, who had been down to Sprig's Hollow to help to stitch new covers for the books in the Sunday-school library, and we had quite a race home to escape a thunder-storm. We're all quite well, thank you, and as happy as the day is long."

"And how do *you* do?"

"Uncommonly well, thank you. I've just been to look after one of my Sunday-school class, who was absent on Sunday. Poor fellow, his mother was ill, and he

stayed at home to read some hymns to her. I quite look forward to Sunday afternoon; I'm fond of teaching, and the children like me; and they are all coming to have tea at my house next week."

Exactly! Go out of yourselves, men, women, boys, girls; that is the way

"To be happy, contented, and blessed."

Go out of yourselves to the Great Redeemer who died for you, to obtain peace with God; and go out of yourselves to make the world better and happier; that is the way to eat well, to sleep well, to live well; that is the way to enjoy peace in your conscience and pleasure in the memories of after years; that is the way to enjoy the loving favor which is better than silver and gold, while you live, and that is the way to have eyes that swim with sorrow and hearts that beat

with affection, look down into your tomb when you are gone. As it concerns our relationship to God and our relationship to man, there is nothing so good for us all as the "going out of ourselves."

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