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THE LOVE OF GOD THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT ¹

St. Matthew xxii, 37-38—"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

IT is said that one who was a lawyer asked our Divine Lord a question, tempting Him, and saying, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

The answer is as given in the text.

The motive and spirit of the human being in bringing questions to Christ must not be to tempt Him; must not be with the purpose of showing aloofness from Him, the purpose of resisting conviction, of practising intellectual acuteness and subtlety; must not be with the aim of justifying the mind in maintaining suspense and preventing faith and acceptance.

If a question is to be asked there must be back of it the longing for truth, the sense of reverence for the Master, an humble seeking and a sincere willingness to be convinced; there must be the honest and good heart ready to appreciate and apply the words of eternal life which Christ will speak.

The questioning of Christ must not be with the aim and effort to view religion as merely a matter of intellect; to reduce it to mere mental conclusions and definitions apart from the feeling and the will, apart from love and obedience. The interpretation of religion as merely a mental matter is

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shown when men halt and refuse acceptance and deny supernatural truth on the ground that, as they say, they do not understand it; on the ground that mystery still remains which cannot be reduced to terms of sight, terms of physical sense. To refuse to be convinced about supernatural truth on the plea of not understanding it, not comprehending it, comes about in reality not because the reason cannot be adequately satisfied, but because intentionally or unintentionally reason has actually been abandoned; because a sense test, a demand for physical so-called demonstration has been substituted in place of the reliable processes of reason.

For men to remain purely critical, refusing to accept supernatural truth, questioning Christ but not following Him, claiming that they cannot believe because they assert they cannot know; this is in actuality to deny that faith has any knowledge; it is to make faith the antithesis of knowledge instead of making it the antithesis of sight. The contrast should not be between faith and knowledge, but between faith and sight. The knowledge which goes with faith reaches further than that which goes with mere sight; it includes the activity of mind and heart and will. The demand for faith does not mean that religion is based on ignorance; but that God has revealed Himself sufficiently to meet the capacities and needs of His human creatures, and that to this revealed truth we are to bring our thought and love and loyalty. Again, the effort to make religion only a matter of intellect, to substitute ideas entirely for life, appears when doctrine is made to supplant obedience instead of being an indispensable stepping-stone to obedience. The creed and the deed must go together; both are necessary; and they are not to supplant each other.

There must be some creed; the question is to have the right one; and then it is to be a help to life.

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Turning from these considerations and mainly desirous all along to speak in such way as to serve particularly the young men and young women who graduate at this commencement, I want to urge the realization that true religion, the finding and fulfilling of the right relation to God, is the first duty, the great commandment, the supreme object of human life. This is axiomatic; but it is an axiom which cannot be too much emphasized when young people are about to go forth to take up the objects and pursuits for which they have been prepared in their university years. Is religion, is the establishment of a true relation to God, to be the first object of our lives, or the last? Is it to be merely one of many objects, to be taken up in moments which may occasionally be spared from other things, and then in the crowd of things to be permitted to fade and vanish; or is it the supreme end?

The priority of true religion, its pervading and prevailing influence as the chief object, its transfiguring effect upon the other objects, its power to unify and glorify the entire human life; this conviction should be with us forever.

Concentration upon our right relation to God, sustained obedience and responsiveness and love towards Him, can be interfered with and negated in such manifold ways that our reflection upon them now could only be partial and incomplete; and my insistence here is that the duty which is the great one and which is the first must be lived for first, and all other duties and interests be seen and sought in its light. Self-will and sin can bring us to fatal separation from God; doubt, unless conquered, can paralyze us and bring us to spiritual destruction; the consciousness of mystery and unearthliness in things spiritual can be allowed to breed unrest, and to cripple conviction and excuse indifference. But it is the preoccupation with secondary things, the preoccupa-

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tion not originally meant as deliberate disobedience, the preoccupation with earthly interests which leaves the spirit inactive and unused; it is this submergence of the soul in the visible and temporal against which just now I make appeal.

Christ, our Lord and Saviour, bids us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness—and not what men call the necessities of life. He does not mean that men shall not labour; but that they shall labour first for the meat that does not perish.

Confronting life, seeing the many objects, called by many voices, drawn to the chosen toil for which we have been equipped—shall we seek to walk with God as spiritual beings created to share his character; or shall the vision of the soul grow dim as the physical eye ranges the earthly scene, and the citizenship in Heaven be abandoned as we grow absorbed in the earthly environment? Whether to live for the soul or for the body; whether to live for immortality and eternal life or for the senses and the dissolution to which they are destined; that is the question. Already we are supernatural beings by the possession of souls; and no need of bread for the body, no eagerness to take up the toil selected, no allurements of earthly life—can be allowed to deaden our spiritual consciousness, or entice us from devotion to God and dependence upon Him. The fact that we are immortal spirits, the self-realization to which we are called as souls only temporarily employing physical bodies and at work in this physical scene; these are not matters to be thought out and decided about only after our barns are filled with fancied plenty, nor after the shallow cups of even innocent pleasure and still less the bitter cups of sin have been drained.

Coming from the hand of God, led by the hand of God, going unto God through Him who is the Way, the Truth

and the Life, let us take up the tasks which await us, dwelling in the world but not being of it; dwelling in the body but using it for the sake of the soul of which it is the transient instrument; laboring to draw up all the other Kingdoms into that celestial order for which we are born.

Back of the determination to live as spiritual beings there must be the primary and invincible conviction that we actually exist as imperishable spirits; and let us enter somewhat upon the grounds of this conviction.

Belief in and the arguments for immortality are so bound to faith in God, so bound to conviction concerning His existence and power and character, that the effort to think of immortality on any other basis must end by a return to the divine basis; must leave the human being straining for further light and compel him to turn to God and the love of God to confirm and establish the hope. Yet the "prophecy of reason", even apart from the conclusive religious evidence, points to the imperishableness of the human spirit.

Dwelling only in a brief way upon some of the considerations not primarily religious, we find powerful promise of immortality in the expansion of faculties in the individual man from childhood to maturity; in the increasing control by the inward personality over the outward body and outward material things and forces; in the possession of accumulated and stored up knowledge, even though the body is doomed to pass. Unless the mind is to survive and have further use for its stores and capacities, nature would show that no purpose is guiding us; reason and logic would be overthrown, and the great hopes of man would come to crushing and indescribable defeat.

No; the promise of survival and the possibilities of life beyond this life are not to end in death; and the permanence

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is confirmed when we turn to our certain faith in God. Then, in the consciousness of the self, in the certainty that there is an ego or soul, in the reality of persisting personal identity, in the memory which makes the being the same being through life—it becomes indubitable that we have a personality which is not a mere series of thoughts; not a product of nor identical with the brain mechanism. The created and finite "I" within the human being stands apart from the physical particles and movements of the brain—self-identifying as a cause which creates volitions and can start into activity the brain instrument. The substantial spiritual self is mysteriously connected with its present material instrument; but is no more to be explained away at one end as a mere phase of perishable matter than it is to be explained at the other end, in pantheistic error, as an impersonal part of a universal and impersonal thought process.

Mr. Tyndall said: "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable." To like effect Mr. Huxley is also to be quoted: "I cannot conceive," says he, "how the phenomena of consciousness as such, and apart from the physical forces by which they are called into existence, are to be brought within the bounds of physical science."

On one side the soul, the spiritual self, is not to be merged into the material brain; nor, on the other side, is the separate and independent personality of the human being to be merged in the universe, or a universe untruly asserted to be identical with God. The pantheism which would deny the personality both of the Creator and the human creature is refuted not only by its conflict with reason, but by the facts of man's moral nature; the facts of free will, obligation and responsibility. Long ago it was

declared by Job that "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding"; and the clear logic is that since the human spirit exists, and is what it is, it will remain.

Again, the will is a creative force and originates motion; and the annihilation of this spiritual force is contrary to all probability. Rev. Dr. Momerie says: "There is no law in science more fundamental, no law which has been supported by a greater variety of experiences, or tested by more searching experiments, than the law of the conservation of energy. The sum of all the energies in the universe is a constant quantity; in other words, forces are never destroyed. If one may extend this law to the psychical sphere—and there is nothing to show that we may not—the soul with its power of volition cannot be annihilated. Were the soul to go out of existence on the dissolution of the body, a force would have been lost, the sum of the energies in the universe would be a changing quantity, the law of the conservation of energy would be false."

The existence of man's self-conscious spirit, using matter but not produced by it, indicates a purpose and a logic working through nature and producing a being clearly above nature; and the irresistible inference is that this human spirit is designed to survive the body, which is its temporary servant. But when we turn from this reasoning to our knowledge of God, to our trust in Him and our convictions concerning His love, we have impregnable assurance that He will not create the finite spirit and then annihilate it; that He will not give us hearts and then destroy us; that He will not call men to suffer for righteousness' sake and then not ordain a future life where righteousness will be vindicated and come to triumph more fully than upon the earth. Christianity assumes the mere fact of immortality,

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the mere fact of human permanence; and is concerned to bring to men the means to attain unto godlike life, and not simply to assure them of imperishableness. Mere indestructibility may not prove to be a joy; and the joy of an endless life must be the development of moral and spiritual qualities akin to the character of God. The Divine love which makes men deathless is further fulfilled in the gift of the Divine Redeemer, who can impart the characteristics of life which will correlate man in peace and harmony with his Maker. Eternal life is more than deathlessness; "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent".

Let us assume with certainty that the soul will persist and be given fitting embodiment in the unseen order; and let us now concentrate our effort upon a present spiritual resurrection, and through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life seek to grow to-day in the life eternal. If we can be uplifted into that life now and here, as is possible through Him—then in the great transition we shall not enter as strangers, but as citizens already naturalized in that eternal order.

Since, therefore, we are spiritual beings, created with capacities to image in humble ways the Divine Creator Spirit who has made us, we must turn to Him at the outset for the interpretation of our destiny, and for the power and way to fulfill it. If we are to find and know ourselves, obedience to the great commandment is the first step; as the Creator alone can interpret the being whom He has endowed with the duty to reflect Him in finite ways. Then, the fundamental needs of human creatures, those that precede and transcend the needs which relate us to the earth and mankind, are spiritual needs; and the God who made us can alone supply the answer and satisfaction for which we

long. The conscience within us, which can never be explained by any materialistic or utilitarian philosophy; the conscience which distinguishes between right and wrong, knows that there is a categorical and imperative standard of value and worth condemning wrong, and confesses an authoritative obligation and responsibility to the right; this conscience witnesses to the Personal Righteous God and urges obedience to Him as the first law of life. The deepest need is not for the bread which keeps the body alive, but for the bread which can sustain and nourish the moral and spiritual nature; which can upbuild and establish us in correspondence and companionship with God.

Christ alone is the true Bread; He alone can meet these fundamental longings of the soul; He alone can reveal the ultimate ideal of life, assure humanity of forgiveness and bestow the power through which the ideal can be fulfilled. As the young man and the young woman go forth to the chosen work, let them first interpret themselves and their destiny through Him; and by his leading they can come unto victory and the joy of a great unity with God. Then, if the law of love and service is to rule in our relation to other human beings, it is not conceivable that men will be bound in full helpfulness to men except as they are bound first to God, who is the universal Father, and bound to Christ, who reveals the Father and fulfills a perfect brotherhood. The full service of man, the true "enthusiasm of humanity," the organization of human society on the basis of men helping and not hurting one another, the abolition of war in all spheres and the realization of peace and universal progress—these will not come about through any mere scientific ethics nor through mere philanthropic programs of parliaments, but only as men and nations grow in Christ-

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likeness, and worship and obey the Father through the Incarnate Son who reveals Him.

Ethics and the love and service of man are not to be sundered from the giving of glory to God in the highest, from true religion and true theology; because only true belief in and obedience to God can lead to full belief in and progressive practice of good-will towards men. As the young men and the young women move on to their tasks, let them in all sincerity realize the obligation of social service; but let them first exercise their citizenship in heaven, and through their worship of God equip themselves to be lowly yet helpful representatives of His good-will to men.

Then, the commandment to love God comes first because human creatures are His servants to whom He has entrusted work to be done for Him and with Him. The obligation to serve Him, to be profitable to Him, to render to Him coöperation for the trust reposed; this rests upon us imperatively as essential destiny. To be ministers and stewards and servants of God is the fundamental purpose of our being. Our faculties and gifts, opportunities and resources, may be misinterpreted by us, and appropriating them to and for ourselves we may forget and deny the divine ownership; and refusing service, we may run to ruin in miscalled and false liberty. But it remains true that God has created and called us for lowly yet genuine partnership with Him; and the fulfillment of that mission, and the loyal use of that glory, can alone satisfy human nature and meet our responsibility.

With what power the parables of our Lord affirm these truths, and particularly the parable of the talents.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man going into a far country, who called unto him his own servants and distributed unto them his goods.”

The omnipotence of God has no limitation which must mean absolute need of aid from finite man; because from all eternity the Divine Creator is perfectly self-sufficient yet perfectly unselfish. Let us beware of and confute the false teaching of pantheism which would make the self-consciousness of God non-existent except as man grows to be self-conscious; would deny that God is within Himself the Perfect Transcendent Being, and without needing an eternal created universe in which to express Himself; would end in the denial of the difference between man and God, the denial of all personality, human and divine.

Against this subtle and destructive error we are to be on guard; and we are to know that the Absolute and Perfect God, whose creative activity means no defect in His own nature and being, has made from the fullness of love the finite human image; from the fullness of love giving him the honour of a godlike destiny. Created not because necessary to God, but because His unselfishness would call us to association with Him, and because He would trust us to ring true to His reliance and not misapply the treasures He bestows, we are called to be His representatives and His incorruptible servants in fulfilling His will and establishing His Kingdom.

The God who is never absent, even though we see Him not with physical eye, trusts us to use in right ways the perilous gift of freedom; and He seeks to evoke our nobility not by despotism but by an inner inspiration. Created and trusted as free beings, given a liberty of choice and so made responsible—we are to have a share in the development of the Divine purposes; and we are not to be drawn into any false interpretation of our relation to God, nor be blind to the self-sacrifice of God in risking the willfulness and sin of man. Neither atheism nor fatalism is the solution of

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human destiny. Selfish and sinful desire may put out the light in the man—tempting him to supplant the will of God with his own will; and he may so come to a practical atheism and live as though his Maker did not exist. Likewise by superficial thinking he may persuade himself that there is no personal God, and that man, whether he is a permanent person or not, is the only will which is directing human affairs.

But because God is not only power, but also wisdom and patience and love; because He does not by power destroy human freedom and abolish responsibility—it is a poor return to reward the Divine beneficence with speculative atheism, or with practical denial of the Divine will through abuse of liberty and refusal of service. On the other hand, man may feign an unreal humbleness, lay his sins to the will of God through a wish for immunity and irresponsibility; and by superficial thinking may come to deny his part in life, may come to the fatalism of materialism or pantheism. But the patience of God is as actual as His power, and His will endures self-limitation in order that man may possess the heritage of real freedom. The slow coming of the Kingdom of God does not mean that the Creator has abdicated; but it involves the truth that man must meet the peril of freely exercising choice, must freely love and seek righteousness, must freely participate in the working out of his life-history as well as his salvation. The power and will of God are not to be interpreted so as to destroy the personality of man; and no necessitarian interpretation of mistaken science and no fatalistic error of philosophy are to be permitted to rob us of the liberty our Divine Maker has given us, nor of the responsibility of obedience. The submission of Omnipotence to resistance from the feeble human creature, the temporary delay of the

full Divine victory, the power permitted to man to bring suffering to God, the willingness of God to sacrifice Himself for man in patience and pity, the conquest won by the Creator by the power of His love over the human heart; this is part, at least, of the teaching of the Cross of Christ. Part, at least, of the truth of the Cross is the assertion that God is Perfect and All-powerful, and yet is a Sufferer, though not defeated; thus, through His very humility, He enters into triumph, and in the Person of the Incarnate Son draws humanity with Him into the life of the Cross. The true relation to God is not that we are to be willful and disloyal, and not that He has made us slaves, but that we are to serve Him with loyalty and obedience and love; that we are exalted to represent Him in His earthly dominion, and are called to stewardship and through Christ unto sonship. Service glorified into companionship, obedience developed and transfigured into freedom, dependence transmuted into sonship, compulsion under the power of God changed to glad and inspired coöperation—these transformations disclose our true relationship.

The great commandment, as we have seen, is to love God; and as one of the reasons of its priority stands the duty of coöperation; coöperation as faithful servants who are to be trained and uplifted into sons. If we ask what are the goods which God distributes, and what the coöperation He will accept, the answer is so manifold that only a few of its particulars can be named. Our human spirits are not finished; finished they are in the sense of being indestructible, but not finished in the direction of growth and conscious correspondence with God. Our spiritual history is not completed by a faith which accepts the mercy of God as proclaimed in Christ, and then permits the life to center on worldliness and wealth, even though claiming

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that wickedness is excluded. The soul is to make conscious effort towards spiritual progress, towards Christlikeness and godlikeness; and we are to work out our salvation, with God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are to seek growth in spiritual stature and power, in order to be of more value to God in the coöperation and service to which we are called.

The earth is to be subdued and humanized, gardens are to be made where there are jungles, forces of destruction are to be conquered and beneficent forces to be multiplied; and man is the appointed instrument. Human society is not finished; and man is the instrument under God to bring about the unifying of humanity—in brotherhood, so that unselfish service shall be the law between individuals and nations, so that the City of God shall be organized and established in peace and love and righteousness.

The Church to which souls were added on Pentecost was an organization seeking not only the welfare of its own members, but it was to bear witness and gather the world to Christ; coöperating to bring the Gospel to every creature. Its members to-day are to seek to be profitable servants of God; not bent merely on saving themselves, but bent on saving others. Not to coöperate to extend the Kingdom, to stand idle in relation to what we term missionary work, is to ignore and deny the law of service in the sphere where its application is most needed: the sphere of human souls where help from God is most required, where the helpers are valuing souls in the spirit of the Divine Saviour who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

In human families fathers and mothers are called to do work for God, as entrusted by the Creator with children to be trained in heavenly citizenship, as commissioned to hand on from generation to generation the inheritances of

righteous character and the knightly ambitions of loyalty to the Divine King. Related to our Maker as His servants, we are to think of life as having the one reigning purpose to fulfill that relation in every sphere; so that life shall be to us an unbroken unity, all legitimate toil may give opportunities for righteousness, and men and women may find ways to serve the Most High wherever their tasks are placed.

Again, it is necessary to point out that religion must be more than a check and restraint from wrong, more than an effort to avoid future pain, more than a vague effort after future happiness. It must necessarily be a restraint against wrong, a means to conquer sin; but it must go further, and be a means to set the heart on holiness, to develop positive love for God and a realization of sympathy and unity. It is duty not only not to disobey the commandments, but likewise duty positively to love the Heavenly Father.

The duty of loving and serving God is not to be left unfulfilled on the claim that His moral commandments are not being violated; the claim that flagrant sin is not being done; the claim that the offense is merely omission and not commission. The man with the one talent is the type of life which is so speciously pleaded, so easily adopted that its error and peril need emphatic declaration. He put from him the divine gift and call and opportunity, making no effort to employ them in fruitful ways. It is the type of life which is sunk in self, waves religion away, and justifies itself with the claim that it is crowded with its own business and is not an evil-doer. But religion cannot be waved away; preoccupation is no excuse and no justification; the very first business is to be useful to God; it is not an optional matter; the fundamental duty is unfulfilled when the man is not loving God; and if the coöperation which that love

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produces is not rendered, the life is obstructing God even though it may claim freedom from vice. Condemnation comes not only upon the evil actively done, but also upon the life which leaves the good undone; which is unprofitable and accomplishes no service.

Here he stands, the servant who is trusted with his opportunity; and then he comes, as he must come before his Master, but empty-handed and empty-hearted, even though he felt himself supplied and safe amidst his so-called securities. There the traveler is stricken down by the evil-doers; but the priest and the Levite who stand and look down upon him in his pain and want, and leave that business not attended to as not theirs, will wake soon or late to aching memories and be haunted by the ghosts of good deeds not done. In another parable there figures the man who was richly clad and fared sumptuously; and while aggressive evil is not recorded of him and he probably did not grudge the crumbs that fell to the beggar, still he was self-centered; love and service were not his watchwords; and he fell upon emptiness and want.

Not only is there required the loyalty that does not disobey, but likewise the loyalty which is at one with the Father; which sees into the Father's heart and sympathizes with Him, and shares in His character of love and compassion and generosity. With wonderful power is this illustrated by the parable in which one son goes into the far country of sin; and the elder son, even though remaining in the Father's house and not alien by direct transgression, is still in the far country of spiritual unlikeness to the Father.

To be saved does not signify merely rescue from penalty, nor mere bestowal of blessings to be accounted precious in the degree in which they can be held in selfish enjoyment; but salvation must include such expansion of character as

will establish harmony with God, and develop godlike traits and qualities. Where love is commanded as the impulse under which coöperation is to be rendered to God, this is possible for men because He first loved us; because His character is what it is; because He has revealed himself not simply as Omnipotence, but as the Heavenly Father, as the Crucified Creator. If we conceive of Him only as power, it is a difficult commandment; but if we conceive of Him as the Father of individual lives, as revealing Himself to us in Christ, as the Divine Personal Being taking upon Him in the Person of the Eternal Son the form of a servant and enduring the sacrifice of the Cross—then the commandment is not difficult. If we realize not only the Divinity of Christ, but likewise the Christlikeness of God; if we realize that in Christ God is revealed in the immeasurable self-denial with which Omnipotence humbles Himself in behalf of the eternal destinies of men; then the power of God must have for us transfigured meaning, and our spirits must become captive to His love.

The Gospel of Christ, proclaiming that God so loved the world as to give for men His Only-Begotten Son, calling men to unity with God through the Son Incarnate, declares and explains a redemption of surpassing glory; a redemption signifying a recreation into holiness, a great atonement and at-one-ment in which through Christ the human character may come humbly to image the divine. Our Lord said to His disciples that henceforth He called them not servants, but friends. St. John declares that "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." *St. John i, 12.*

The greatness of the salvation in Christ is not that through mercy we may escape punishment, but that the evil in us may be taken out; that we may through Him truly

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become new creatures and receive the adoption of sons. May the Holy Spirit enable us to know God as Father, to realize His love, and to answer with the entirety of our being; and thus loving Him, may our obedience be to us an everlasting joy, and to Him an acceptable service.

My purpose has been to bring before the graduates and those still in college the obligation of religion as the supreme interest of life, the service of God as the supreme object, the relationship of filial unity with God as the highest joy—rather than attempt a discussion of educational ideals and theories. But necessarily I am prompted to words of greeting to the authorities of the Rice Institute, and of appreciation of the work which it achieves. The significance and exceeding value of this University to the city, state and country are of widest and most thankful recognition; and proportioned to this great worth is the grateful memory which will be cherished of the founder whose munificence made possible the establishment of the institution and its progress. The beauty of the architecture is a rare feature. Justly honoured far and near for the wisdom of its administration, for the scholarship of those who direct its courses, and for the sound learning and training which it imparts—we wish for it through the generations a destiny of lofty and enduring service. We pray that it may be the means of preparing multitudes through the years not only for bread-winning, but for the highest duties of life; for loyal citizenship in the cities of men and in the City of God. Without entering upon educational questions save in the briefest and most general way, I would point out that education is not to be limited to storing the memory with facts, nor to training the hands for toil. It is not to be limited to acquiring a knowledge of literature and science and an appreciation of art. Back of the memory and the

logical faculty and the imagination is the personality, the personal self; and it is the personal self which uses the various faculties for the ends it has in view. The human person holds relation to the Divine Personal Being and to other finite persons; and education is the development of the personality so that it may hold right relations. The end of education is a social end; the development of the finite personal being so that he may fulfill duties to God and to men.

The standard of duty is a social standard, not a standard individualistic and selfish, and it is the genius of Christianity which must inspire and promote educational ideals and plans, because Christ and the Gospel of Christ alone really transcend local and racial conceptions of duty, and really expand the soul into love of the Universal Divine Father and universal love of man. Man is born for citizenship on earth and in heaven; born to deny himself and seek a universal welfare and a universal salvation. Let us pray, therefore, that the world over educational systems will turn more and more to Christ, more and more accept his leadership, to the end that men may not substitute brain or bread for conscience and heart; to the end that men may find in the government of God through Christ the true fraternity for one another of which they have dreamed.

Returning to considerations in the direction suggested at the outset—I want to press upon the young men and women gathered here the reasonableness of Christianity, the certainty of such knowledge of God as will enable the love which is commanded, the peace which Christ the Divine Revealer and Redeemer can bestow as fulfilling the deepest needs and hopes of humanity. The fundamental truths and facts of the historic Christian religion, as summarized in the Nicene Creed, are not contrary to reason; but reason

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properly employed will support them; and they will give peace to the reason when reverently and fully studied. The prejudice against the supernatural and miraculous nature of Christianity, sometimes justified as founded on science, is not founded on true science; and if there is a real conviction of the existence of God and a right interpretation of nature as created and sustained by the Divine will, such prejudice cannot exist. The resistance to Christianity, as asserted to involve belief contradicting so-called natural law, is really based on denial or neglect of indubitable spiritual facts; and is a misreading of nature and human history, and is blind to spiritual realities.

The Incarnation of the Son of God in human nature, with the sequence of miraculous events in His history, is to be seen as the explanation of the spiritual facts of the universe, as the climax which the Creator has purposed all along, as not violation of so-called natural law but fulfillment and proof of spiritual law. With mighty testimony and mighty thinking the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews points us to Christ as the consummation of the self-revelation of God, as the consummation of the Divine plan for man:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” *Hebrews i, 1-4.*

Establishing our faith and hope and life upon God, we are to see that His self-revelation as recorded in the Bible is progressive; that human need cries out for the manifestation of God in Person; that His love is such as to give the answer in the Incarnate Son, who redeems from sin and carries human nature to its perfection; that through faith and obedience Christlikeness may pass into us, and we may humbly share in that imaging of God which the Father planned from the beginning.

As miraculous as reasonable, the Divine Champion of our humanity interprets, saves, fulfills; and He is with us and walks with us as we move on in our pilgrimage. May our eyes not be holden; may we follow Him in that life which will supernaturalize the earth and be instrumental in advancing the Divine Kingdom to full victory.

This day is Pentecost, the day on which vast multitudes in Christendom commemorate the fulfillment by the Resurrected and Ascended Lord of His promise to send power to His Apostles for their appointed work. May power from on high also be ours; an inspiration to each in his individual sphere from the indwelling God; an inner light to assure us of the presence of Christ; a strength within to meet our tasks acceptably to God. May we be empowered to witness and to work here, whatever the duty, so as to build for the Kingdom of the Risen Lord; and when the day here is finished, may there still be place for us and work appointed in other mansions of the Father's house.

DAVIS SESSUMS.