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"Speaking Truth in Love."

"At it, all at it, always at it."

The Central Messenger.

FOR TRUTH AND SERVICE.

Vol. I.

Wake Forest, N. C., July, 1911.

No. 7.

JESUS' TEACHERS AND THE SOURCE OF HIS GREATNESS.

Three teachers he (Jesus) had to whom he diligently listened: nature, the Bible, and His own soul.

His life was largely spent out of doors. Later, He was accustomed to wrap His shawl or cloak about Him and lie down upon the grass, with the blue sky above His only canopy. We may well believe that this was His custom in His earlier life; that He did not first make the hills His refuge after He had begun His public ministry but that they were already familiar resorts to Him. His teaching makes the habit of His life clear: the habit of an observing eye and a meditating spirit. In one of the pictured windows of the Central Congregational Church of Boston, Jesus, as a boy, is portrayed looking upon the sparrow dead upon the grass at His feet. The artist is a true interpreter. It was in His boyhood that He learned that not a sparrow falleth to ground without "my Father"; that some seeds grew, falling in fertile soil, while the birds carried other seeds away; that some were choked and hindered by the tares in which they grew; with what painstaking the husbandman endeavored to bring back to life the fruitless tree, and how readily he hewed it to the ground when it bore no fruit; how the lilies of the field, grew surpassing the glory of Solomon. That He ever knew the scientific use of nature in material service there is no indication, but nature was to Him written in symbolic language, and He learned to read it with reverent attention.

His spiritual faith in the two great tenets of Judaism, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, makes it clear that He had imbibed the spirit of the Old Testament. His frequent quotations from it make it clear that He was familiar with its words. In all ages of the world it may be questioned whether commentators have not done as much to obscure as to interpret the Scriptures. Jesus pushed away the obscurity which the scribes had spun over the simple message of the prophets, the traditions with which they had made of none effect the law of God. The Old Testament in Christ's time, as sometimes since, was like an ancient palimpsest on which over the valuable original text a later scribe has written valueless reflections of his own. Jesus erased these valueless reflections and read with keen spiritual vision the original writing.

And He had what modern life denies to most children of the peasant class—leisure. "In the East," says Edmond Stapfer, "poverty is almost unknown; compulsory labor and the struggle for life are still more rare. Food and clothing suffice. Men have no extraordinary needs, and the easy conditions of life allow ample leisure to all. The Jew of the first century, like the Arab of today, passed long hours of every day in contemplation; and when he had worked a little at his trade and performed his religious duties, he could rest and meditate at his ease." Whether poverty is an advantage or a disadvantage, whether it elevates or degrades, whether it

leads to virtue or to vice, depends on the use which is made of it. Not in vain had Jesus read in the old Hebrew Psalms the words, "Be still, and know that I am God." In these hours of quiet and unharrassing meditation He heard in His own soul that voice which is better and clearer than the confused and enigmatical voices of nature, which is more inspiring even than the echoes of that inward monitor as they are recorded in the sacred pages of Scripture.

There are three elements that go to make up character: heredity, education, and that innate force which we sometimes call genius. "Only the lower natures," says Henry Ward Beecher, "are formed by external circumstances. Great natures are freely developed by forces from within." That force from within we sometimes call genius, we sometimes call inspiration, we sometimes call divinity; but whatever we call it, it is from within, working out, not from without working on that which is within. The greatness of the Master cannot be attributed to ancestry or to education—that is, to His heredity or environment, in which we all live, and move, and have our being, but to which we do not all open our souls that we may receive its influence or all yield our wills that we may obey its directions. Jesus was not produced by His age, but was Himself a producer of the ages: strong because He was strong in spirit and because He was obedient to the divine calling.

"The true Shekinah is Man," says St. Chrysostom. "The essence of our being," says Carlyle, after quoting St. Chrysostom, "the mystery in us that calls itself I—oh, what words have we for such things—is a breath of Heaven; the Highest Being reveals himself in man. * * * WE are the miracle of miracles—the inscrutable mystery of God. We cannot understand it, we know not how to speak of it; but we may feel and know, if we like, that it is verily so." That truth lies at the threshold of our fragmentary studies in the life of the Master. Every man, however humble his origin, however inadequate his education, however poverty-stricken his environment, can still be great, not perhaps in the extent of his influence, not in the largeness of his power, not in a widely extended reputation, but in all that makes true character—the divineness of his life. He can become so by accepting the teaching, adopting the principles, and imbibing the spirit of the Master Builder.—Lyman Abbott, in *The Outlook*.

When Whitfield was at Exeter, a man in the audience had his pocket full of stones, which he intended to throw at the preacher. He waited through the prayer; and as the text was about to be announced, he pulled out a stone. But God sent the sword of the Spirit into his breast; and the stone was never thrown. He went up to Whitfield after the service, saying, "Sir, I came here intending to give you a broken head; but God has given me a BROKEN HEART."

You complain of ingratitude; were you not repaid by your pleasure in doing good?—Levis.

EXTRACTS FROM A GREAT SERMON.

The following extracts are from a sermon by Dr. Lyman Abbott, published in the *Congregationalist* of June 24, 1911.

Moral Certainties.

There are some things we know, and, first of all, we know that goodness is better than wickedness, virtue is better than vice, uprightness is better than crookedness; no matter where the virtue may lead, no matter where the crookedness may lead. We know that if honor and truth and integrity led down to eternal hell it would be better to follow them than it would to follow vice, iniquity and selfishness, though they crowned us in an eternal heaven.

We do not know a great deal about heaven, we do not know a great deal about hell; but we do know that virtue is better than vice, goodness than wickedness. We know that character is after all the supreme end of living. If a man gets that and sacrifices everything else, he is rich, and if he loses that and gains everything else he is poor. We do not always act upon that knowledge when we judge ourselves, but we always act upon it when we are judging others. Love of truth is the foundation of science; love of beauty is the foundation of art; love of goodness and virtue is the foundation of religion. That is the starting point.

The Supremacy of Jesus.

I do not know of what substance the Father is; I do not know of what substance Jesus Christ is. What I do know is this—that when I look into the actual life that I know about, the men and women that are about me, the men and women in all the history of the past, of all the living beings that ever lived and walked the earth, there is no one that so fills my heart with reverence, with affection, with loyal love, with sincere desire to follow, as doth Jesus Christ. And when my neighbor sometimes says to me, "You are looking, not at a real life, but at a life which the apostles idealized," I reply with John Stuart Mill, "All the evidence shows they got their ideals from him, not he his ideals from them."

What is divine? What shall I reverence? I will not reverence power, the greater the power the worse the being if that power is used selfishly. I will not reverence wisdom; the greater the wisdom the worse the being if that wisdom is used to pull himself up and put others down. I will reverence unselfishness, I will reverence service, I will reverence love. And nowhere in all the history of the world is there such an embodiment of unselfishness and service and love and sacrifice as in the story of those Four Gospels.

So to me Jesus Christ is not only what Martineau has called him, "the realized ideal of humanity"; he is the realization of my ideal of divinity. When I have given my imagination wings, when I have read poetry and prophecy and sacred books, and tried to picture to myself the supremest creature my imagination can create,

it fades into darkness, as the stars fade before the rising sun, by the side of this real character that lived and loved and suffered and died. That I can know.

Let me turn to this chapter from which my text is taken:

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

That is Paul's description of love. Now, I will put the name of Jesus Christ where Paul has put "love," and read it again and see if there is any incongruity in the reading:

"Jesus Christ suffered long, and was kind; Jesus Christ envied not; Jesus Christ vaunted not himself. Jesus Christ was not puffed up, Jesus Christ did not behave himself improperly, Jesus Christ did not seek his own, Jesus Christ was not easily provoked, Jesus Christ thought no evil; Jesus Christ rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth; Jesus Christ beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

That is a character worth having, that is a life worth living. And that is what I mean by the divinity of Jesus Christ.

My Four Anchors.

You remember in that story of the shipwreck of Paul he said that they threw out four anchors and waited for day. I have thrown out in my life those four anchors—my faith in goodness, my faith in the possibility of men's accomplishment of goodness, my faith in Jesus Christ as the ideal of goodness, and my faith in the divine helpfulness in the world to help me to goodness. And then I have waited for day. Not all is clear; the universe is still an enigma, there is a great deal I do not pretend to understand. But the changes that have taken place in the last hundred years have only deepened and enlarged my faith.

I am a democrat in every nerve of my body, in every globule of my blood. And what I mean by "democrat" is this—that God has made this world, not for a few privileged classes, rich and strong and wise, but for all his children; and his Kingdom will not come until all his children have something like a fair chance to make of themselves what they can in the world, and to have some share in its joys and in its prosperity. And I am setting myself with clearer and clearer vision as the years go by to do what little I can to make this a world of universal humanity. I care less about preparing men for heaven hereafter, and more for bringing heaven to earth; less about singing, "Heaven is my home," and more about turning home into heaven.

And I believe—believe? Oh, I am sure of it, sure of it—that there is One higher than the highest, and greater than the greatest, and wiser than the wisest, and better than the best, who is working out this world destiny. And I—I do the little I can do, and leave the rest to God.