

## ARTICLE V.

## THE OUTLINES OF A PREACHABLE THEOLOGY.

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[The following statement was read by Dr. Berle before the council which installed him as pastor of the Union Park Congregational Church, Chicago, February 12, 1903. The fact that the council was one of the largest that has ever been called together in the West, and had as members of it pastors from a number of the leading Western cities as well as prominent educators and others who without a single question or dissenting voice approved the statement, together with the profound spiritual impression made upon the council and audience, makes the statement specially interesting at this time, as indicating in a fairly representative way the trend of thought in the Congregational churches in the Middle West, and also the East, since Dr. Berle came from a twelve-years' pastorate in Boston to Union Park Church in Chicago.—Ed.]

IN presenting this statement of my conception of my task as a Christian preacher and teacher, I do not understand that I am to make any such presentation of the same as shall pretend to exhaust my thought on this subject, or even indicate it, upon many of the interesting and striking questions which of necessity arise in connection with such a calling. I am not here to-day to construct a model for my profession, or to indicate the ideal fulfillment of the Christian minister's work. I am here to show in outline how that task lies in my own mind and heart as these have been wrought upon through the past years of my ministerial life and work. And in offering such a statement, with the beliefs that underlie the same, it must also be kept in mind that I do not offer to-day any finalities of theological interpretation, nor pledge myself that the views which are living and dominant in my thought to-day shall not be superseded by other views to-morrow or

the day following. We are commonly supposed to be in the hand of an all-wise and supreme Ruler and Lord, who advises us that, as our days, so shall our strength be; and what thus applies to the commoner incidents of human existence I hold to be no less effective in the realm of religious and theological thought. I may say, however, that I have no present expectation that the outline which I am now to present will not, for a long period, at least be the working basis of my services in this church; for they have been wrought, not merely out of an extended academic discipline, but much more out of a wide and exceedingly varied Christian experience, forged, as it were, in the fires of severe and costly efforts for Christ and his Kingdom in the world. I do not hold that this council is to examine *de novo* into my fitness for the Christian ministry; for, if these years past have not settled that question, it will never be settled in this world. I am rather to indicate the emphasis in the body of Christian doctrine which may be expected in my service and preaching in the work of a Christian minister.

I have still in my possession the first outline which I ever drew for a statement of this kind. It began with the Doctrine of God, and proceeded thence to the Doctrine of Man, then to the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, then to the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and finally to the Doctrine of the Christian Life. To-day the order is almost exactly reversed, beginning with the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and proceeding onward till, as the final and crowning knowledge and experience of a ripe Christian life, we have the Christian Doctrine of God. The reasons for this change of order will appear as I proceed.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I hold to be the first and most fundamental of doctrines for the Christian

preacher to know and teach. The doctrine of God, as well as the belief in God, is not distinctively a Christian doctrine. All the ethnic religions have a doctrine of God, and religion itself may be said to involve such a doctrine. So that theism as such is not the starting-point of Christianity, because Christianity should begin, and does begin, with something distinctive to itself. There is abroad, and has always been abroad in the world, a doctrine of a spirit, and sometimes of a holy spirit, more or less crudely understood by mankind; but the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is God operating in man, in the world, in nature, and through all things, is a doctrine which cannot be found anywhere until after the organization of Christianity by St. Paul upon the basis of the teachings of Jesus Christ. The most casual glance at the Scriptures amply confirms this statement. All Christian doctrines and all Christian experiences are explained, interpreted, and illuminated only by the Holy Spirit; and for this reason the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is logically the first doctrine with which the Christian preacher has to familiarize himself in the work of proclaiming the gospel. It may be said that no scriptural doctrine can be even fairly approached except through the prior understanding of what the Bible has to teach about the Spirit of God. Notice, for example, that God must be so understood. God is himself pronounced to be a Spirit, and that they that would worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth. Man is a spirit, for it is the spirit in man that is the candle of the Lord. Man's communion with God is possible only on this basis, for the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. Moreover, intercession, forgiveness, and the whole total of the redemptive relation, is thus ascertained, for the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Moreover, the Spirit is to be the source of light, and the efficient instru-

ment of communion with God; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ (which is an expression used by St. Paul interchangeably with the Holy Spirit), he is none of his. Again, the Spirit of God is to be the instructor of the church, and the guide into truth. According to the promise of Christ, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth. Not only this, but this same Spirit is also to be the disciplinarian of the church, for he shall reprove the world of sin, he shall warn of judgment, explain righteousness and the various basic elements of the service of God. Even more than this, he shall reveal Christ, satisfying the most fundamental of all the practical needs of the church of God, namely, that it shall see Christ as he is. Added to all this, the very Scriptures in which all these things are revealed, are the product of the activities of this very Spirit, because holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Thus the knowledge of God and the explication of his nature, character, and purposes, are said to be the work of the Spirit, the Scriptures are his work, the persuasion of sinners and the building up of saints are due to his presence and power, the very knowledge and glory of Christ are a part of his express purpose and mission in the world. Thus the most persuasive and fundamental and constant doctrine of the Scripture, or of the Christian life, or religion in any sense Christian, is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Holy Spirit of God as the immanent God who is in all things, over all things, through all things; and that the supreme quest of the spirit of man is to find and commune with the Holy Spirit; and that such communion is the first and the last requisite of peace with God, and power in life. I believe that this Holy Spirit is a Person, not merely a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. I believe that communion with him is living, vital, and true communion, as is the communion of

the spirit of man with man. Because it is personal, the communion has all the elements of personal intercourse, of happiness and pain, of joy and sorrow, of satisfaction and grief, and that the final and authentic source of appeal for life and strength in the Christian religion is to the presence and communion of the Holy Spirit of God. I believe this Spirit has always been in the world, has always responded to the efforts of men to know and to obey God, and that men are in the spirit, and free from the law of sin and death, when the Spirit of God dwells in them.

This Holy Spirit I do not, however, hold as a subjective revelation merely, though it is that; it is the direct and effective impression upon one living spirit by another living spirit, and, while the testimony is for the most part a subjective consciousness of the presence of God and communion with him, its objective result is a holy life, and obedience to the truth as it is revealed in Christ. For, no man can be in the spirit, and call Christ anathema. But, the Spirit of God having for his supreme purpose the revelation of Christ, the acceptance of Christ and the holy life in conformity with his law and instruction are the satisfactory evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of men. The ancient maxim of the church "*Ubi Spiritu Sancto, ibi ecclesia*" I hold to be true, but it is even more true that "*Ubi Spiritu Sancto ibi esto Christus Liberator,*" and this I hold it my first great and most constant duty and privilege to preach and to teach.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The human spirit liberated from the law of sin and bondage, instructed by the Spirit of God, immediately begins its divine career of growth in grace, and knowledge of the Kingdom of God. The records of such growth constitute the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is the collected remains of the words which men, under the guidance of the

Spirit of God, have left for our instruction, illumination, inspiration, and direction in the making of a Christian life. They present the effort of man to express in godly action, with all the imperfections of our human nature, and all the defects inherent in a race long given over to sinful behavior, the appeal of the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth. The Scriptures thus remaining to us are not to be regarded as transcripts of the Holy Spirit's dictation, so much as records of the Holy Spirit's activity with men learning the better way, and striving to realize the ideals and the purposes of Christ in the world. That the message is not a complete one may be inferred from Christ's own words, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," coupled with the promise, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth," which also, however, is to be coupled with the other promise of Jesus, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," which I understand to mean his continual instructional presence with his disciples in the Christian church forever. Thus the record of the Holy Spirit's activity is a never-ending record, and must go on while the converting activity of the Holy Spirit remains as the promise of the church. But none the less is the record which we have, the standard of the normal modes by which the Holy Spirit communicates with men, the presentation of the life and words of Christ, the story of the organization of the church and its possession by the Holy Spirit. The history of its weakness, its heresies and apostasies, all are comprehended in this record in which the Holy Spirit is the chief actor. I believe the Scriptures to provide in this way the secure, and in this sense the final, court of appeal in matters of faith and practice, because they are the product of the Holy Spirit, and give to us the authentic story of the effort of God to lead men to himself. I believe that, rightly divided, the word of truth

is mighty to the pulling down of great strongholds; that it pierces to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; that its letter will always kill, but that its indwelling Spirit will always give life; that it is never to be used as a spiritual strait-jacket, but always as a spiritual garment which now clings closely and now hangs loosely, which, while clothing the personality, does not stop its free development, which, while providing warmth, does not produce suffocation, but everywhere and always, for the Christ-like soul striving under the pressure and persuasion of the Holy Spirit to know God, provides protection, comfort, and the sense of spiritual privacy. The Scriptures exist for the life of Christians, not Christians for the defense of the Scriptures. Indeed, the defense of the Scriptures has always seemed to me to be a sort of blunder. That which bears the stamp of being genuine life, while we may and ought to steadfastly show that it lies in close and intimate relations with all other life, is its own best witness, and has the air and intrinsic evidence of verity, which does not need any "defense." If by defending the Scriptures is meant, to show that they stand in a close and vital harmony with the facts of life as we know them, and as they have been known through the ages, then such defense is reasonable and desirable. But if by defense is meant, what is implied, for example, by the title "Defender of the Faith," then I cannot but feel that it is as absurd to propose such a thing as it would be to propose to defend the proposition that a breathing, speaking human being is alive. The indwelling Spirit of truth is the only authentic and capable agent in the maintenance of the authority and power of the Holy Scripture.

I wish here to accentuate a distinction which has of late years acquired an increasing influence in my own spiritual life and thought,—the distinction between the Holy Scrip-

tures and the Word of God. I believe the Bible contains the Word of God. But I also believe it to be possible to know the Bible very fully and completely without knowing the Word of God. What makes the Christian life is the personal communion of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit; and the acts and words of this Spirit are to be spiritually discerned. Now Scripture, that is its letter, does not become the word of God till it is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and by him interpreted to the spirit of him who seeks its guidance and direction. This is the reason, in my judgment, why it has been possible to achieve a vast amount of biblical learning without any vital Christian life or spiritual power; why it has been possible to know all things, and yet, not having love, to be as nothing. In the earlier years of my ministry I sought to know very thoroughly the Bible; it has been the dearest prayer of my heart and mind in later years to know the Word of God. This distinction, I think, has become more and more vital to me, as I have come to feel the primacy of the knowledge and presence of the Holy Spirit as the source of authority and power in Christian work, and has been a constant source of fertilizing strength to me in the interpretation and application of the truths of Scripture to the facts and necessities of the church of Christ in the world. Questions like the inerrancy of the Scriptures, or even the authority of the Scriptures, under the influence of this conception, have steadily declined in interest and importance, and I have come to feel, that, when my own spiritual nature was most in accord with the commands of the Holy Spirit, my interpretations of the Bible have been fruitful far beyond what they would or could be, in the mere exercise of such powers as I might be able to command in the recognized methods of biblical investigation and research. "*Pectus est qui facit theologum.*"

## THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

As the beginning of the spiritual life called Christian, is in the communion, on terms of fellowship and kindred interest, with the Holy Spirit, the ultimate aim and end of which is the knowledge and identification of purpose with God, the most important fact in the record of the Holy Spirit's activity in this direction is the revelation of the will and word of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This is life eternal, said Jesus, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send. And the knowledge of Jesus Christ is declared to be the medium through which we come to the ultimate knowledge of God the Father. Thus we have Christ saying, "No man cometh to the Father but by me"; also, "I and my Father are one," and again and again reasserting the unity of himself with God in purpose, power, and spiritual expression. Obviously, if a human being can be conceived who can have such purposes and be endowed with such power, and whose spiritual nature is so allied to the nature of God as these sayings of Christ indicate that his is,—this being is the natural and appropriate mediator between God and man, not in the sense of standing between God and man to ward off an impending stroke of wrath, but as forming the passageway from God to man, and from man to God. That the Word was made flesh would seem to indicate that God chose Christ as the means of his own advent into humanity in the flesh, and that Christ should say, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," would seem to imply that he is to be the means through which men are to come to God. This is the teaching of the Scriptures, and this is, also, the message of the Spirit of God to the regenerate soul. Thus Christ is a mediator. But this mediation is not to be regarded as a substitution, nor yet as propitiation, in the sense of purchase price, nor in any other sense than as one regards an open door as the

natural means of egress and ingress from one room to another. Christ is the Door. This is his own figure, and it accurately represents his mission. He is the last and completest provision of God by which men may come into fellowship and communion with Him, and see, in terms of their common and untechnical life, what the life of obedience and service to God is like. Thus the person of Christ becomes a matter of supreme interest in the task of the Christian preacher and teacher. One might almost say that it is his all-engrossing task. Because, without Christ, while the approach to God is possible, and while there undoubtedly was communion with God before Christ; and while it cannot be denied that, in the ethnic religions and among the heathen of the world, there are unquestionably souls that seek to commune with God, feeling after him, if haply they may find him, yet the supreme interest of the Christian preacher and teacher is to keep this Door open. This Door closed will not blot God from life, nor from the world; but this Door open, offers the only substantial hope known to man whereby the whole world shall be led to forsake its sins and come to God. Now it is not necessary to determine whether a door be of one or another nature, quality, or substance. Doors are of all kinds. The main fact is that it opens, and makes possible the passage from one side of it to the other. In this way I hold the theories of the manner in which Christ's life operates upon the sinning soul. The main and commanding fact for the preacher and teacher in the church is that the adequate presentation of Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God has been, and is, the most powerful motive known to men to lead them from the life of sin and bondage into the life of liberty and righteousness. Hence the gaze of the church and the preacher is steadily to be kept upon that portion of God's word, and the truths and the words of Christ's teaching, and most of all upon Christ himself, as the em-

bodiment of them all, that the church shall not lack the constant presentation of the greatest motive known in the history of mankind for bringing men into right relations with God. It is interesting to note that there is a progress in the Christology of the New Testament, just as there is in almost every other doctrine of Sacred Scripture, and that the supreme Christology is a Christology of the spirit, confirming and enjoining the obligation to be what the Scriptures reveal Christ as having been. This is the task and the burden of Christian discipline; and, for the effective enforcement of this purpose, all Christian institutions exist. Christ is that revelation of God, which indicates clearly what the Christian is to be like, to hold perfect fellowship and communion with God. And in this sense Christ is to be regarded, not as the final end of Christian thought, and not at all the *terminus ad quem* of Christian striving, but as the exemplary manifestation of what a God-possessed life is in the flesh.

I believe that Christ thus was the Word made flesh, the incarnate Son of God, and the head, titular and prophetic, of the whole race of the sons of God, for whom he is the ever-open door to the knowledge and presence of God. The proclamation of this fact, and the reiteration of all the events in connection with this wonderful and ultimate manifestation of the divine concern for men, and the unvarying presentation of Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, constitute one of the most urgent and unceasing tasks of the Christian minister. That because the Spirit of God seeks to reveal Christ, and because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and because in him did all the fullness of the Godhead dwell, and because he is before all things, and by him all things consist, the preaching of Christ as the Revealer and the Reconciler is the splendid and wonderful privilege of the Christian minister; while, to emulate Christ as Shep-

herd, to feed the flock of God, to nurture the young, and to lead the disciples into the fertile pastures of love, duty, and submissive dependence upon God, must be among the best compensations of Christian consecration in the work of the ministry of the Word. Christ is perennially the Door, the Way, the mediating entrance, to the knowledge and fullness of God.

#### THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The revelation of the purpose and the love of God in Jesus Christ would, however, have remained a purposeless manifestation of mere brilliancy and skill on the part of the Deity, had it not possessed reproductive power which was to emerge into some permanent form in the structural relations of mankind. A divine incarnation of God, giving the world a magnificent motive to personal rectitude and self-sacrifice, would be an anomalous display if it did not result in some form of a Christian society in which such a model should be the norm and habitual standard of practice and endeavor. Thus we find Jesus continually using the expression "the Kingdom of God." Many of his discourses, notably his parables and other sayings, are illustrative of this ideal society, which is always called "the Kingdom of God." Though it has the church as a part of it, it is not coexistent with it, and is not to be identified with it, except that the church is definitely a part of it. It is the society of Christlike men, all of whom are governed by the principles of the Kingdom, which are very few, but very explicitly laid down by Christ himself. So much stress is laid in Jesus' own preaching upon this Kingdom of God, that its nature and its methods must necessarily constitute a most important part of the ministry of the Christian teacher and preacher. It is worth while, therefore, that I should indicate briefly what I conceive Christ to have taught about the Kingdom of God, and my own

relation to it as a minister of Christ. First of all, it is to be noted that it is not ecclesiastical. It seems to have no special creeds nor any distinctive ceremonials. It seems to include all kinds of creatures and to develop on all kinds of soil. It seems to regard all men alike, and to utterly lay aside accidental distinctions between men, and places its estimate solely upon their inner and spiritual relations. We are to note that its members are free and loving subjects of God, men who are able to hold spiritual communion with him. They are governed by love, and are to seek the Kingdom before all things else in this world. They are to be subjects of law, but a law which is not written on tables of stone, but on the heart, and in the conscience; and the law which has hitherto governed the life without, is to be spiritualized, and made dominant in the life within. It is to be a society where all souls are kings and priests unto God, and where the rule of service is the rule of preferment. Whoso would be great in the Kingdom must be the servant of all! It is a dominion where the quest is not for power and authority, but for effectiveness in producing righteousness after the pattern of Christ. It is to be a growing kingdom, where the relations of righteousness are to be progressively embodied into all lives, and where the patient endurance of infirmity is preferred to the impatient destruction of life. It is a kingdom where law is dominant, but the law is the law of love. It is to exercise brotherhood, and practice charity. It is to seek first life in Christ, and then grow under the tutelage of the Spirit of God. It is to be a prophetic rather than a priestly kingdom, and its sacrifices are to be the sacrifices of service rather than those of ritual and offering. Its great desire is righteousness and its unfailing yearning is love.

Obviously it appears that a kingdom so constituted at once brings into the field of vision the social aspects of Christian living and serving. It reveals an ideal society

to be achieved, and brings into bold relief what Canon Fremantle has aptly styled "The World as a Subject of Redemption." It shows that beyond and transcending the individual righteousness, there is a social righteousness, for which Christ had a message, and to which he had a mission. It points out that the normal environment for a Christian individual is a Christian society, and that individual duty and individual desire are largely, and often most truly, to be interpreted in the light of the social requirement. It is this which is expanded by St. Paul into the statement that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; that life lies not only within us, but about us; that the streams of the Holy Spirit's power and instruction which flow into us must also produce streams of life and power flowing out of us into the social organism round about us, of which we are a part. Thus we find Christ saying of the Christian believer, "Out of his belly shall flow streams of living water"; and again, "Whoso believeth in me and my word, out of him shall flow rivers of water," etc. Clearly the implication is, that the indwelling of the Spirit, producing the righteousness of God-likeness, will also produce as its most characteristic, nay necessary, product, a stream which flows into the social life of mankind for the uplifting of the race and the general spiritualization of the race.

Now I take it that, on these grounds, and for the reason that this teaching formed so large and vital a part of Christ's own ministry, the Christian teacher must himself be a teacher concerning the Kingdom of God, and that he shall present the social aspects of the gospel and righteousness in its social setting, and demand, not less carefully or steadily than the demand of Christ upon the individual will, for self-surrender and obedience. This becomes increasingly necessary as we become aware how great the power and influence are which man can acquire, and does ac-

quire, over his fellow-men. Only the social teaching of Jesus can rescue us here from spiritual tyranny on the one hand, or material tyranny on the other. The one emerges in spiritual principedoms, culminating in a papacy; while the other arrogantly tells the world it has "nothing to arbitrate," when thousands are freezing to death. Possibly there is at the present time no more urgent message than this. But whether it is the most urgent or not, it certainly is a vital and integral portion of the teaching of Jesus, without which no Christian ministry can be said to be complete. The Christian preacher has thus a message to the civic life, the commercial life, the intellectual life of mankind, because these all are a portion of the social structural relation, the spiritualizing of which constitutes the Kingdom of God. I believe that, as a minister of Christ, I have no choice but to accept this duty, and to proclaim, according to my light and understanding, the laws of the Kingdom of God, as laid down by Jesus Christ, with reference to all the great social questions of our time; always remembering that I do this as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and in the interest of a spiritual kingdom, of which he is the administrative head, and whose purpose and end is to do and know the will of God.

#### THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

But while the Kingdom of God is not first nor foremost a church, but a life, it has a church which is the teaching model of the Kingdom till the time when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. This church itself again brings us back to our primary doctrine, since it is the creation of the Spirit of God, and is held in existence by the Spirit of God, and is the special concern and care of the Spirit of God, according to the Scriptures. The Church of Jesus Christ, according to the teaching of the New Testament, is the

assembly of men and women who have spiritual fellowship with God, uniting to realize the life of Jesus Christ in the world. Here again we are impressed with the simplicity of its requirements, and the utter want of complex and confusing ritual as a prerequisite for fellowship with it. Its members are to be devout persons instructed by the Holy Spirit, evidenced by the conformity in life and purpose to the ideals presented by Jesus Christ. The church is to illustrate the laws of the kingdom in the narrower relations of ecclesiastical coöperation and service. Its creeds, if it has them, are to be coextensive only with the words of Jesus in expressing the constitutive principles of the Kingdom of God; its ordinances, those only which he expressly enjoined; its methods, those which the Spirit of God shall reveal as exigency and need shall demand; its discipline, the exactions of loving fellowship and the fulfillment of Christ's law; its sanctions, the social necessities of the kingdom; and its joys, the delights of perfect fellowship with the Lord of Hosts. The main characteristic which it is to display to the world is its spirituality. It is to be distinguished by this, and almost by this alone. It may not be unlike the world in appearance, knowledge, wealth, learning, or any other accident of its social environment; but it is to be unique in its spiritual power, and exceptional in its grasp upon the spiritual interpretations of the great primary facts of life. Without these, it has almost no reason for existence. It is to be ethically admirable, but it must be spiritually powerful. Its message is to commend itself, not by the excellence of the wisdom of men, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power. It is not mysticism, though it is a mystery, just like the godliness from which it springs. It is in alliance with nature, but it is also supernatural. It is rational, but it is also ultra-rational. It is in the world, yet not of it; and yet is always for it, and striving with it. This spiritual

quality and power is almost the only excuse for the existence of the Christian church. Its philanthropies conceivably might be accomplished without it. Its instruction in ethics certainly might be secured without it. Its worship may perhaps be imagined without it. But the thought of a church, as Christ portrayed it, and as the sacraments which he instituted depict its character and aims, cannot be conceived without a spiritual dynamic, which is distinctly and manifestly the presence of God among men, the living fellowship of the Most High with his children in the world. What the individual Christian must show of Christlike serving and obedience, as the evidence of his own communion with the Spirit of God, the church as a whole must utter forth socially, as the reasonable demonstration that it is the working model of the Kingdom of God. Here, again, we note that it has no orders of spirituality, no primacies, nor ranks, but is simply a spiritual democracy, where one is the Master, even Christ, and all are brethren. I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, whose one single test is not even a test, so much as it is the expression of a purpose, the union of the soul with Christ in the obedient witness to God, whose one governing law is love, and whose constant effort is for brotherhood, without which, whatever else it may be, it is not a church of Jesus Christ. I hold this church to be a democracy in form and in government; that its authority lies solely in its collective voice, and that its collective voice, when that can be ascertained, is likely to be the path of wisdom and of power; that it cannot delegate its authority to any individual or individuals, but that the preservation of the truth of God and the glory of Christ alike require that we should constantly do our utmost to discover what the Spirit saith to the churches. These things I expect to preach and to teach.

## THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

Thus by progressive stages we have arrived at the great final doctrine in which all Scripture and Christian experience at last emerge—the Christian doctrine of God. The great ultimate end of all spiritual ambition and hope is to know and love and serve God; and all other Christian ideas and services have this as their final result. The Holy Spirit is to bring us and hold us in communion with God till we are perfectly instructed and inseparably allied with him. Christ is the Door by which we come to God. The Kingdom of God is to afford us the field in which we are to find our development in the larger relations of social fellowship and service, and the church is to afford us the spiritual momentum and reserve by which the Kingdom is to be enriched and spiritualized. But all these are for the purpose that we may come ultimately to God, and realize God as the source of all authority and life, and find our life and our rest and our peace in him. This is in St. Paul's mind to be the end of Christ's own service, and when the Incarnation has fulfilled its purpose in the revelation and effective portrayal of the will of God, the Son himself is to retire, that God may be all in all. Thus we find him writing in Corinthians, "And when all things have been subjected unto him [that is, Christ], then shall the Son also be himself subjected to him that did subject all things, that God may be all in all." Thus all Christian teaching, as well as all Christian living, culminates in the knowledge and fellowship of God, and the relation of sonship to God is the final goal and reward of Christian self-sacrifice in this life. The faith which has patiently striven on through darkness is to become light and knowledge, and the process of likeness to God is to become approximately completed; so that it may be written, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, what we shall be; but we know that when he

shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Thus the acquisition of the knowledge of God as he is, merges in likeness to him, and this is the last triumph of the Christian life. Mature Christianity looks through the mediating Christ to the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation or shadow that is cast by turning. Established faith is able to say, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Absolute trust can then say, "The Eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," all of which are the expressions of the final stages of faith, and the maturing or flowering of the experiences of suffering and pain for righteousness' sake, in the building of the Kingdom of God. Thus life eternal is the knowledge of God, and the perfect life is the perfect fellowship with him. When the communion with God has reached the stage of stability and unfluctuating serenity, the knowledge of God is characterized by the filial relation which reveals and enforces God's fatherhood as contrasted with his sovereignty, and his love as contrasted with his commandments. When we come into the region, we know the significance of the whole vocabulary of communion and filial affection which mark the life of Jesus Christ. It is standing on this summit of spiritual life and power, that Jesus is enabled to say, "I and my Father are one." In a less powerful sense, but in a not less real sense, the Christian, liberated, trained, and chastened into harmony with God's law, and lifted into God's life, may also say with Christ, "I and my Father are one." For this he taught us in the matchless prayer to say, "Our Father who art in heaven," well knowing how imperfectly we should realize, till the ages had rolled over us, what that title implied. The knowledge of God in its power, fullness, and reach is not the first, but the last, great and satisfying truth of the

Christian religion, and that Christ is its expounder and teacher.

With the attainment of knowledge like this, righteousness has become the habit of life, with the hope of ultimate triumph as the great goal in sight; trust has become the rule of existence, and the qualifying factor of all experience; and prayer has become the atmosphere of a loving fellowship, when the child comes home, and finds itself completely, and finds that it is with God.