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Food for the Body and Food for the Soul.

[An Exposition and Study containing Some Thoughts suggested by the War. St. Mark v. 43: "And commanded that something should be given her to eat."]

AS we read the four Gospels nothing strikes us more than the individuality of the writers. We have four portraits painted by four loving hands of Him Who was "fairer than the children of men." Each artist paints his picture from the aspect which most strikes his mind, and catches the expression which he most loves. St. Mark, the amanuensis of St. Peter, has a noticeable love for the objective, the circumstantial. I will give two instances. When he is describing the temptation of our Lord, he alone adds a graphic touch which brings before us the desolation of the scene: "He was with the wild beasts." When he describes the blessing of the little children by our Lord, he alone gives the inimitable touch so dear to the parental heart: "He took them up in His arms." The restoration to life of the daughter of Jairus is recorded by three Evangelists. It is characteristic of St. Mark that he does not forget to notice that Christ "commanded that something should be given her to eat."

I imagine that those of us who have found our days too short for our appointed tasks, and have been occupied with the great concerns of life, think with regret of the omission of little things: a letter has been unanswered, or a kind word of sympathy with a sorrowing friend or acquaintance has been unspoken. The happiness of life largely consists in attention to little things. How often husband and wife, after years of wedded life, forget those little acts of attention which they were delighted to give before marriage, and yet these acts are links in a golden chain, binding heart to heart in abiding love. God is a God of little things as well as of great. The creed of the Stoics was: "Magna Dii curant parva negligent"—"The gods care for great things, but are oblivious of small things." Our Lord has told us that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our Father's knowledge. Christ never forgot a little thing. The daughter of Jairus was a young and growing girl, and weak after her sickness. Christ knew what she needed, and that, amid

the excitement of her resurrection, this would be forgotten, and so He thoughtfully "commanded that something should be given her to eat." It was no marvel that our Lord should raise this girl to life, it was the natural consequence of His Deity; but we read with admiration that afterwards He took care to see that she had the nourishment which she so much needed. I would say in passing that St. Mark alone gives us the exact words spoken by Jesus, "Talitha Cumi." They hide a precious meaning from the English reader. Scholars tell us that the Aramaic word "Talitha"—"little girl"—is an expression of great tenderness and of peculiar endearment.

There is one lesson which we ought to learn from the fact that God is a God of little things as well as of great. I think that I speak the experience of most Christians when I say that we carry our great troubles at once to "the Throne of grace," but not our little ones. Hence it is that our small anxieties, perplexities and worries interfere so much with the peace of the soul. The Christian who fully realizes that God is interested in and cares for the least concerns of our daily life is kept in peace. His soul is like some small lake or tarn in the moors which, protected by sheltering hills from every passing wind, reflects on its unruffled surface the turquoise sky above. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." I have written at length on the question of little things suggested by the text. I would refer to another point before calling attention to more important matters in connexion with the tragic and terrible war in which [we are] engaged. I desire, in teaching the Word of God, to gather up the fragments that fall from the Master's table—the small morsels of Divine bread—that nothing be lost. We live in days of attack on the supernatural. It is well, therefore, to notice that a miracle was never wrought except for a moral purpose, and everywhere we see economy of power. Does Christ feed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes? The bread is distributed by human hands, and the fragments are collected to be the after-food of the Twelve. Does He speak the omnipotent words "Talitha Cumi"? He commands others to give her to eat. "It is one of the manifest laws in the Divine economy that miraculous operations in extraordinary circumstances are never intended to supersede human efforts in ordinary ones."

FOOD FOR THE BODY.

Many as are the teachings of the text, the truest is that God supplies the wants and necessities of the life which He gives : that, wherever He bestows life, He is careful to add that which the life needs for its development and perfection. No sooner did Christ give life to the daughter of Jairus than He made provision for its sustenance. I would suggest a line of thought which has, during the present stress, impressed my own mind. Chrysostom said long ago : " God has given the universe in the place of a Book." I turn to the records of Creation, and I see a great law at work. Lapse of time is unknown to the Eternal. I go back countless centuries before the advent of the human race. I ascend some Silurian hill, and, to quote the words of the late President of the Royal Astronomical Society, preached before the University of Cambridge, I see that " there are no cattle grazing upon a thousand hills—and why? God has not yet clothed those hills with grass, and the law of nature is everywhere true, that God provides for the life which He gives. . . . Once more we listen. We hear the sound of insect life, but the forests are tuneless of the glad songs of birds—and why? As yet ' the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind ' are not created." I come to an epoch in Creation with which we are more familiar—the last creative period before the advent of man, the crown and climax of animate nature—and there for the first time we find the corn plant, by which we mean all such cereals as wheat and rice, which were to sustain the countless millions of the human family when God should breathe into man the breath of life. Everywhere we see in the records of Creation an illustration of the words of the text in the thoughtful supply of God for the support of the life which He alone can give. These records seem to me to illuminate our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. In addressing the multitude gathered on the slopes of Hattin, He is evidently speaking to many who were anxious about the necessities of life. The words were spoken for the comfort of men in every age.

The working classes of this country, speaking generally, have never been so prosperous, in spite of dearness of food, as during the present war. On the other hand, there is another class to whom failing investments, heavy taxation and the price and scarcity of food, have brought the gravest anxiety. I single out the poorer

clergy, to whom the increased value of tithes has brought no relief, and ministers of other denominations. They are finding the greatest difficulty in obtaining for their families the barest necessities of life. Parents in these and other ranks of life are painfully anxious about the present and future welfare of their children. It may be that they are even tempted, like the Israelites in the wilderness, to murmur and say : " Can He give bread also, and provide flesh for His people ? " The loving and compassionate words spoken by Christ nearly 2,000 years ago were intended for us to-day. " Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Jehovah Jireh !

Every bush and tufted tree
Warbles sweet philosophy.
Mortals, fly from doubt and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow.

When our Lord ascended all power was given to Him not only in heaven but on earth. He is the appointed Controller of Food. The God-man, Who miraculously fed the 5,000 lest they should faint by the way, has influenced by His Spirit the people of the United States, by a noble self-sacrifice, to supply the food without which England would, like Serbia and Armenia, have been more or less a famine-stricken country. In spite of national sins, of which we have heard too little, God has been very gracious and merciful to the British Isles. Would that, with united voice, we offered thanksgiving and praise, and presented vows to the Throne of grace of sacrifice, duty and service.

AN ANALOGY.

Pascal spoke as a true philosopher when he said : " Nature, after all, is only another form of grace." In drawing the following analogy we are travelling on safe ground. It was drawn by Christ Himself. " I am the bread of life : he that cometh to Me shall never hunger ; " and again, " I am the living bread : if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." In speaking of the analogy of grace, I see the principle to which I have already referred manifested in the sphere of religion, and observe a close analogy between physical and spiritual life. The God of Grace has made a rich provision for the sustenance of the life of the soul, the life which He alone can give. The Day of Pentecost was the actual if not

potential birthday of the Church. Then the Holy Ghost came down, the Lord and Giver of life. For the support of spiritual life provision had already been made in three ways—a Divine Revelation, the Institution of the Lord's Supper, and a Gospel Ministry.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL.

Before the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament canon was complete. Speaking of this Testament our Lord said: "Search the Scriptures—they testify of Me." As every road in the Roman Empire led to the golden milestone in the Forum of the Imperial City, so all parts of these Scriptures led to Christ. I can only speak of one phase of the Bible. I desire to say a few words to those who are bereaved by the war of beloved relatives who have perished on the battlefield. Divine revelation is a faith delivered once for all, but it is not delivered once for all to human consciousness. Portions of it, to use the expression of Coleridge, have not "found" the reader, i.e., they have not come with power to his mind and heart. In days of prosperity he is more or less oblivious of the many passages which have been given in Divine compassion to ameliorate the sorrows of mankind. The traveller by train may know that there is a lighted lamp in the carriage, but he does not realize its comfort until he is plunged into the darkness of the tunnel. I appeal to sorrowing ones, and ask: In searching the Scriptures, have you not found that, as Jesus, the living Word, was a "man of sorrows," so the written Word is "acquainted with grief." It has a panacea for every trouble. As you read under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has not Jesus, the Good Samaritan, drawn near and poured the wine and oil of His tenderness and love into your wounded heart? "His love is better than wine." Mrs. Browning, when writing of Nature, says:

"Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest trees
To show above the unwasted stars."

Is this not true in the analogy of grace. In the night of your sorrow have not the stars of promises appeared to your view which you never saw before? Has not your spiritual horizon been extended? Have not heaven and the thought of reunion with loved ones who have made the great sacrifice shone out more clear and distinct than in previous days! Sanctified sorrow leads to a land

of broad spaces and fair visions. As, with tear-dimmed eyes you kneel in prayer, the pillar of the cloud will kindle up into the pillar of fire, and you will find, as time rolls on, that patient acquiescence with our Heavenly Father's will leads to a rich aftermath of joy. To the end of time the Bible will meet the moral and religious requirements of each succeeding age, and will be the precious food which will sustain, nourish and strengthen the spiritual life of the saints of God.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is a second instance of the analogy between the law of grace and the great law of nature of which I have spoken. Before the Day of Pentecost our Lord Himself instituted a sacrament which was to sustain and nourish the life of the new-born Church. I must be brief. The Lord's Supper was instituted to be a commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross "offered once for all," and at the same time to be a distinct channel of grace. As certainly as Christ was visibly present in the upper room, so certainly to the eye of faith His presence is seen in this blessed Sacrament. Faith sees the great High Priest breaking the bread and giving the cup, and knows that the officiating minister is only His representative. In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is a real Presence, not in the elements, nor accompanying the elements, but in the heart of the faithful recipient, who spiritually eats the Body of Christ and drinks His Blood. I would guard against an error. In doing this I will not strain the sacred narrative of which my text forms a part, but simply use it as an illustration of an important truth. Our Lord first utters the life-giving words "Talitha Cumi," and then commands that something should be given her to eat. The Lord's Supper was not instituted to give spiritual life, but to sustain it when it is given. I cannot forbear to express my thankfulness that the Zwinglian view of the Sacrament which so largely prevailed in a previous generation among the Evangelical clergy has almost entirely passed away. To-day, in most of our Churches, at least in town populations, the Holy Communion forms an integral part of our Sunday services, and, like the members of the early Church on each Lord's day, many have the opportunity and privilege of partaking of the Eucharistic Feast to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls.

A GOSPEL MINISTRY.

The third provision for the life of the Church was made, as in the case of the two other provisions, before Pentecost. Christ gave His commission to preach the Gospel not only to the Apostles, but to a divinely appointed Ministry to the end of time. The order of the commission to St. Peter is worthy of notice. Our Lord says first, "Feed My lambs," and then "Feed My sheep." This order speaks of His tender love to little children, and it seems also to speak of the great importance which He attached to the religious education of the young in the future history of the Church and the world. We confess with deep humiliation that the Church of God has failed to reach the masses—in other words, that "Christianity is not in possession" in England to-day. We ask why? Among many reasons, I mention one which especially refers to the Church of England. Owing to the continuous migration of the population from country villages and small towns to our cities and other great centres of industry, a multitude of great parishes have been created. As a consequence, the clergy have been very largely understaffed. House-to-house visitation has been impossible. The shepherds have been so occupied in making stakes and hurdles for the fold that they have had little time to fulfil their special commission to feed His sheep. A lack of witness-bearing on the part of individual Christians, so conspicuous a feature of the early Church, and a chief cause of its rapid expansion, has been and is a cause of failure. I must add a want of Christian charity among men of different schools of thought in the Church of England and outside its borders. I single out what I believe to be the chief reason—present-day preaching.

During the last few years I have heard many sermons and read others. I speak with pain when I say that very few preachers gave prominence to the great central truth of the Christian faith—the Atonement. In most instances the need of conversion was entirely ignored, whilst the doctrine of justification by faith—the doctrine of a "standing or falling Church"—was non-existent. In some cases Christ was preached, but not Christ crucified. Our Lord's words are true for all time. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." What brought about the great Evangelical Revival? The answer is, The fearless denunciation of sin and its fatal consequences,

and the equally fearless proclamation of redeeming love, the free, full and absolute forgiveness of sin, and deliverance from its power by the cleansing blood of the Lamb. We believe that, at the close of this war, there will be such an opportunity for the revival of religion by the aid of the Holy Spirit, such as we have never known before. Our chaplains tell us that many of our soldiers and sailors have for the first time, amid the horrors of war, realized the importance of eternal things; many of the bereaved, who hitherto have led worldly lives, are hungering for consolation, whilst many others, who beforetime rejected with scorn the doctrine of substitution, have, in the vicarious suffering of our troops, who have covered themselves with imperishable glory, gained some glimpses of the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God Who, in His incarnation, "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." What is to be the message of the Church? It can only be one—Christ the food of perishing souls, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ interceding, Christ returning to establish upon a new earth a Kingdom wherein righteousness and peace will be eternally united. Above all, there must be united earnest prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Day of Pentecost was preceded, shall I not say brought about, by the fervent, continuous, united and believing prayers of the infant Church. I close my remarks with the words of the late Professor Swete: "The risen Lord Himself, sent into the world by the Father, now in His turn sends His Church. But He does not send her unequipped. He had been conceived by the Holy Spirit, and before the Ministry baptized with the Spirit; in the power of the Spirit He had entered upon the work which had now been accomplished. If the Church was to carry on His mission, she also must be born of the Spirit, baptized with the Spirit, inspired by the Spirit, and thus enabled to do her part in the regeneration of the world."

"SENEX."