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# THE CHURCHMAN

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almost venture to say, dominating influence upon the successful Bohemian or Hussite movement.

A. H. WRATISLAW.



### ART. III.—THE TRANSFIGURATION.

**A**T the triennial Convocation of the American Church, which assembled in Philadelphia on October 3rd, 1883, it was resolved, on the recommendation of the Committee on enlarging the Book of Common Prayer, to make an addition to the Calendar by the insertion of "The Transfiguration" as a festival of the first class, provided with its own proper Psalms. I cannot but think that it is to be regretted that the compilers of our Calendar, in their reasonable anxiety to diminish the burdensome number of holy days superstitiously observed before the Reformation, omitted the recognition of this festival of very ancient observance; inasmuch as the event in the life of our Lord which it commemorated is very important and interesting, and its teaching most profitable.

I propose to endeavour to substantiate this claim by inviting attention to the significance, purpose, and teaching of the scene recorded by the Evangelists, matters which, it may safely be said, have too little attention commonly paid to them by readers of the Gospel narrative. It must be "good for us to be" there, in thought, at the foot of the mountain; for, as Bishop Hall says, "Nearer to heaven ye cannot come, while ye are upon earth." May both writer and readers feel that they are on "holy ground," and that a reverent and cautious spirit alone befits such an investigation.

**I. The Narrative.**—The three Synoptic Gospels give us very precise and strictly harmonious accounts. It was six days before our Lord's declaration in the last verse of Matt. xvi., which is closely connected with Peter's good confession and subsequent rash and mistaken expostulation with his Master, that Jesus took with Him the favoured three—the inner circle of the Apostles, who were privileged to be His companions on other special occasions, notably at the scene of His deepest humiliation (in which the strongest contrast to the glory of the Transfiguration was presented) in Gethsemane—"and brought them up into an high mountain apart." He went there, as St. Luke, the Evangelist of the true humanity of our Lord, tells us, *to pray*—no unwonted practice with Him.

None of the Evangelists give us the name of "the mountain," or enable us with certainty to identify it. It is enough to remark that the traditionary Tabor is out of the question, since

its summit was at that time occupied by a stronghold; and that it is almost universally held that one of the spurs of Mount Hermon, the only snow-capped mountain in Palestine, and which is near to Caesarea Philippi, the scene of the events of the preceding chapter, and the place whence it would appear from St. Mark (ix. 30) our Lord and His followers set out for Galilee on the next day, was in all probability the mountain of the Transfiguration.

We may however, I think, believe that the precise sites of most of the great events in our Lord's earthly life are not, and never will be known; God in His wise providence having guarded against the danger of the superstitious veneration and idolatrous use of such localities.

It was probably night, for this was the Lord's accustomed season for retirement to pray, and St. Luke assigns the descent to "the day after." This would greatly enhance the striking character of the scene.

"As He prayed," He was transfigured before them; "the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and glistening as snow" (Luke); "so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark); "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt.).

Of this mysterious change two explanations may be given. (1) The exceeding brightness may have been the effect of the Divine nature in Christ, irradiating His humanity, and breaking through the veil of flesh which ordinarily concealed it from mortal eye. "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty," says St. Peter, alluding to this event (2 Ep. i. 16.)

"Not from above or from without, as in the case of Moses and Stephen, came the light, reflected only upon the beholder, but from within, while it did not merely play upon the countenance, but arrayed His entire person, and overflowed the very garments which He wore." (Compare "Thou deckest thyself with light as it were with a garment" Psa. civ. 2, P.B.V.)

Or (2) it may be regarded as an anticipation of the glorification of His humanity, (for we must never forget that as truly man He attained glory through suffering),—of His mediatorial glory. "He received from God the Father honour and glory," says St. Peter (2 Ep. i. 17). The description given by one of the three witnesses who, while a prisoner in Patmos, saw Him again in His glory, is essentially similar to the account given of His appearance on this occasion. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire. . . His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength" (Rev. i. 14, 16.) If this be the true explanation, the disciples saw Jesus on the holy mount as He is now at the

right hand of God, and as He will appear when He shall come again in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. Then, too, this glory was a glimpse of the glory which shall hereafter be theirs who look for the Saviour from heaven, "Who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be like the body of His glory."

"And behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory." The recognition of their identity on the part of the Apostles seems to have been intuitive, and may serve as an intimation that there will be such recognition in a future state. What the subject of their discourse was, St. Luke tells us: "They spake of His decease ['departure,' R.V. margin—*ἔξοδον*, a noteworthy expression] which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The presence of these two had a special significance in connection with the teaching of the Transfiguration. Moses the lawgiver, and Elijah the prophet—the one the founder, the other the great defender of the Old Dispensation, which He had come at once to supersede and to fulfil, bear their united testimony to Jesus, the end of the law, and the subject of prophecy. They bear witness, moreover, to that which is the crowning-point of His work—His atoning death. Nor is it without significance that while they depart, fading away from sight now that their testimony has been borne, and their delegated and temporary authority resigned into His hands, He remains; and the same voice which gave the law, and spake by the prophets, now proclaims of Him: "This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him." "God Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

Moses and Elijah may have discharged another mission with reference to the Saviour. They both had passed through death, or at least *from* this life, and knew the triumph that lies beyond mortality for the faithful servants of God. Their presence spake of the grave conquered, and of the eternal glory beyond. "When," remarks the author of "Modern Painters" (vol. iii. 392), "in the desert He was girding Himself for the work of life, angels of life came and ministered unto Him. Now in the fair world, when He is girding Himself for the work of death, the ministrants come to Him from the grave, but from the grave conquered—one from that tomb under Abarim, which His own hand had sealed long ago; the other from the rest into which he had entered without seeing corruption. There stood by Him Moses and Elias, and spake of His decease. And when the prayer is ended, the task accepted, then first since the star paused over Him at Bethlehem, the full glory falls upon Him from heaven, and the

testimony is borne to His everlasting Sonship and power, "Hear ye Him."

We may, I think, further regard this appearance as throwing light upon the resurrection-state, as a foreshadowing of the Communion of Saints in their glorified condition, finding its centre in the Incarnate Son of God. The one is the representative of those who shall not sleep, but shall be changed at the last trump—the prophet caught up into heaven in a whirlwind: and the other of those who shall be raised from the sleep of death—Moses, whose body it seems probable, after being subject to dissolution, was withdrawn from the dominion of death without seeing corruption. The mysterious statement in Deuteronomy xxxiv. 6, as to the Lord burying him, indicating that his body was reserved for some special honour,<sup>1</sup> and the equally mysterious reference, in Jude 9, to the contest between Michael and the devil disputing about the body of Moses, intimating, may we not infer, the unwillingness of Satan, who has the power of death, to be prematurely despoiled of his prey by him who brought God's order of release; both lend support to this supposition, while it serves to throw light upon the latter passage.

The three disciples, as afterwards in Gethsemane, were heavy with sleep, either the effect of weariness—natural, as it was night—or perhaps rather the evidence of a state of ecstasy (as in the case of Abraham (Genesis xv. 12); Daniel (viii. 18; x. 9) and others). Apparently they did not witness the beginning of the scene, but "when they were [wide] awake ['suddenly starting into full consciousness,' such is the force of the expression employed; Alford and Trench, however, render it, 'having watched, or kept themselves awake throughout'] they saw His glory, and the two men who stood with Him." The narrative forbids the idea of a dream, or vision of a disordered imagination, or an optical delusion.

"And it came to pass as they [Moses and Elias] were parting from Him" (Luke, R.V.), their testimony borne, their mission

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<sup>1</sup> "The purpose of God was to prepare for him a condition both of body and soul resembling that of these two men of God, Enoch and Elijah. Men bury a corpse that it may pass into corruption. If Jehovah, therefore, would not suffer the body of Moses to be buried by men, it is but natural to seek for the reason in the fact that He did not intend to leave him to corruption, but when burying it (with His own hand) imparted a power to it which preserved it from corruption, and prepared the way for it to pass into the same form of existence to which Enoch and Elijah were taken without either death or burial." (Kurtz, quoted in Keil and Delitzsch's "Commentary on the Pentateuch," vol. iii. p. 515, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, which takes the same view, referring, in proof of it, to the narrative of the Transfiguration.)

of consolation ended, Peter, always himself, as though desirous of detaining them and prolonging the fascinating scene, said unto Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles [booths, R.V. margin]; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said"—"for," St. Mark adds, "they were sore afraid," bewildered and amazed at what they saw. "While he thus spoke, there came a bright cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared as they [Jesus and the two men] entered into the cloud." That cloud was doubtless the visible sign of the presence of the invisible God; the cloud in which He came down of old on Sinai, and from which He spake to Moses at the door of the tabernacle; the cloud which covered the tent of the congregation and filled the Temple of Solomon, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud. "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son; hear Him." It was the Father's "Amen" to the witness of Law and Prophets: the Father's acceptance of His Son's consecration of Himself to do His will through death: the Father's investiture of His Son with supreme authority over men. "And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes and looked suddenly round about" (Mark), "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." The scene was over: the glory had departed. Around them stood the grey mountain-tops, catching the morning light, and at their feet lay the familiar landscape, and the hum of distant voices rose from the plain below. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them that they should tell no man what they had seen, till the Son of Man were risen from the dead." Its lesson was for Him, and for themselves, and not for the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Those who would eliminate the supernatural element from the life of Christ have, as might be expected, sought to explain away the scene, either by attributing its origin to the impression made by a thunder-storm on the excited minds of the narrators, or by resolving it into the imagery of a dream or a waking vision. It may be enough, in reply to such theories, to remark that to one who believes in the miracle of the Incarnation, who acknowledges Emmanuel—God manifest in the flesh—no miracles connected with His life can present any difficulty. The marvel would be, if in the record of that life we did not meet with such. The simple, graphic, circumstantial style of the narrative, moreover, and the perfect harmony of the three versions which we possess, coupled with the slight variations of detail in their description, testifying, as these do, against any collusion between their authors, are so inconsistent with any view but that of its literal truth and objective reality, that to accept any of these theories would be not only to ignore the inspiration of the Evangelists, but even to destroy the credibility of their narrative. The

II. What that lesson was, and what is the special significance of this event, we will now consider; and we shall, I think, easily see that it was no unmeaning pageant, no unintelligible interruption in the life of the "man of sorrows," although apparently so much out of keeping with its wonted course.

In order to realize this, we must carefully note the position which the Transfiguration occupies in the narrative of the Evangelists. We shall find that it fills a very clearly-defined place in our Lord's ministry, and serves as a landmark in His life, standing as the great intermediate event between His Baptism and His Passion, occurring, as it probably did, about six months before the Crucifixion. It is carefully narrated with all that preceded and followed it in each of the three Synoptic Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

The teaching of our Lord admits of easy division into two periods or stages. During the first of these, its theme was the testimony concerning His person—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. During the second, its theme was that He must suffer, and die, and rise again. We shall find that the Transfiguration occupies in relation to the latter period a similar position to that which is occupied by our Lord's Baptism in relation to the former period. In both cases the audible voice of God the Father bears witness to His Incarnate Son.<sup>2</sup>

This is distinctly perceived when we note the context, and what immediately preceded it. We find in all the three records that our Lord at Cæsarea Philippi closed the first

way in which one of the three speaks of the event as a sure evidence of Christ's Deity and glory, equally forbids any such explanation, save at the expense of the trustworthiness of his testimony, for he adduces it (2 Peter i. 16-19) as a confirmation of his teaching, declaring it to be no "cunningly devised fable."

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Thomson, in his valuable introduction to the Gospels in the "Speaker's Commentary," has given from this point of view an analysis of the contents of the three Gospels, comparing the treatment of these divisions by each Evangelist. "In St. Matthew, the history up to the Transfiguration occupies rather more than one half of the whole: the history of the last six months rather less than one half; and the history of the Passion, beginning from the entry into Jerusalem, about one third. In St. Mark, the history up to the Transfiguration is almost exactly one half, and the history of the Passion occupies about a third. In St. Luke, the first part of the history is a little more than one third, and the account of the Passion about one fourth of the whole; the difference in his case being owing to the interposition between the Transfiguration and the Passion of a long section containing acts and sayings of the Lord, which neither of the other two Evangelists have recorded."—(Page xiv.)

<sup>2</sup> See Godet, p. 11. "This moment marks the apogee of the public ministry of Jesus; and, if we may venture to say it, the point of transition from action to passion."



period of His ministry with the appropriate question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? Has what they have seen and heard of Me led them to know Me?" In the name of his fellow-apostles, Peter declares that *they* had learned; *they* knew that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus commends this confession of faith, and tells him that "flesh and blood"—human teachers, or natural wisdom—"had not revealed the truth unto him." "*From that time forth,*" says St. Matthew, and St. Mark and St. Luke are equally explicit as to the time and the sequence of the teaching, "began Jesus to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Such teaching we do not meet with in any of the previous discourses of our Lord. But the disciples were now, as Peter's confession indicated, prepared to be led into further truth, and henceforward their Master's teaching was directed, as the events of His life were hastening, to the Cross.

How hard this new lesson was for them to learn we may gather from Peter's unseemly remonstrance with Jesus. "He took Him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord [or 'God have mercy on Thee,' R.V. margin]; this shall never be unto Thee." But He turned and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (R.V.). The Lord further warned His disciples that they too must be content to endure self-denial, and take up the Cross, and lose life for His sake, that they might find it. "For the Son of Man," He added, "shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to His works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We may ask the question, Was the Transfiguration a fulfilment of the closing words of the discourse quoted above? These cannot, it is evident, refer to the second advent referred to in the previous verse, for our Lord says that some of those who were then present should live to see that coming. On the other hand, the transient glory of the Transfiguration can scarcely be held to fully satisfy the grandeur of the language used—language which again would scarcely have been employed with reference to an event only a week distant. The most satisfactory explanation of the prediction recognises its accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem and the passing away of the old Jewish economy—the mightiest act of judgment by the Son of Man which the world has yet seen, and which, occurring about forty years later, was to be witnessed by some survivors of the little company whom our Lord was addressing. In confirmation of this interpretation, we may recall two other sayings of the Lord: "This generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34):

The Transfiguration took place exactly a week after the unfolding of this new and saddening phase in the teaching of the Lord. "After six days," say SS. Matthew and Mark; while St. Luke, including the days on which the words were spoken and the event took place, writes, "About an eight days after these sayings."

Standing then in this well-defined position, and relation to the progressive character of our Lord's teaching, we may, I think, without much difficulty, gather the main purposes which this event was designed to serve.

The first purpose of the Transfiguration doubtless regarded the Redeemer Himself; while its second regarded the Apostles.

(1) We shall ignore the truth of our Lord's perfect humanity, and fail to appreciate the purport of much that He said and did, if we do not realize that although He voluntarily and cheerfully gave Himself to suffer and die, the prospect of His approaching agony and death was nevertheless one from which His human nature shrank. It was a real struggle with the powers of darkness upon which He had entered—a real temptation of Satan which He endured. The sad and gloomy vista of shame and suffering, with the cross standing at the end of it, lay all open before Him; and as He looked down it, the exclamation broke forth, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?"

As man, He needed strength and comfort under the prospect. As man, He sought them by prayer. Those long nights spent on the mountain-top, of which this was one (St. Luke tells us, ix. 28, He had gone up to pray), were they not seasons in which the sorrowful soul of Jesus sought consolation and support, and in which these were communicated to Him? Ordinarily speaking, indeed, none are privy to what passes at such seasons save the soul that seeks and receives, and the God Who hears and gives. We are, however, in the case of our Great Exemplar, permitted almost to enter the secret chamber of communion with heaven, and not only to hear the

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and concerning John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 22.)

Have then these words no reference to an event which in all the three Synoptic Gospels is narrated in immediate connection with them? The true answer seems to be that they have, inasmuch as the Transfiguration was a pledge to the disciples, and a prelude of what should be hereafter. It was a revelation of the glory of the Son of Man, which, though now hidden from human eyes, could at any time be manifested. It showed that even while He wore the form of a servant, and was about to suffer and die at the hands of men, He had a kingdom to come in. St. Peter's words, referring to this event, seem to confirm this view: "We made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . We were eyewitnesses to His majesty" (2 Ep. i. 16). See Trench's "Studies in the Gospels," p. 184, etc.; and Bishop Horsley's "Sermons," xii.

prayer which goes up, but also to see the answer which comes down. In Gethsemane we listen to the thrice-repeated supplication, and behold the outward manifestation of the exceeding sorrow of soul which poured it forth. We see also the answer given—the angel who appeared from heaven strengthening Him. So here, too, the answer to Christ's prayer ("as He prayed," Luke) is made visible to us, while we gain a glimpse of the glory that surrounded Him, till the mountain-top becomes the gate of heaven—nay, heaven itself, and while we hear the voice that speaks of a Father's love to Him, and bears divine testimony on His behalf before His followers. Must we not believe that such nights as these, when the Son of God breathed, so to speak, His native air (for may we not regard this as only a sample in which the curtain is withdrawn for the instruction of the three, and of ourselves through their testimony?), refreshed and invigorated and calmed His spirit after and before the long days of unceasing and arduous and generally discouraging labour which preceded and followed them, and enabled Him to bear up under the foreknowledge of his coming woes?<sup>1</sup>

(2) With regard to the three witnesses, the design of the Transfiguration was doubtless to prepare them, as it strengthened their Master for Gethsemane, where they should be with Him also, and for all that should follow. It is difficult for us to realize how bitter and disappointing a lesson it was which

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Godet, in his very suggestive "Studies on the New Testament," propounds the following explanation as the key to the story of the Transfiguration: "Two opposite modes of departing this life offered themselves to Him at that moment. One, that to which He had a right by virtue of His holiness, and which, so considered, was in His case the normal issue—the glorious transformation originally appointed for man when not separated from God, and of which this transfiguration itself was the prelude. Jesus had it in His power to accept this triumphal departure; and it was right that God should offer it to Him, for it was the reward due to His holiness. But in thus re-entering heaven, Jesus must have entered it alone. The door must of necessity have closed behind Him. Humanity, unreconciled, would have remained on earth, struggling with the bonds of sin and death until its entire dissolution. Side by side with this mode of departure, Jesus contemplates another, to be accomplished at Jerusalem, that city which kills the prophets, and which would still less spare the holy One of God, if He refuses to give way to its carnal will. This painful end to His life is the subject of His conversation with the two great representatives of the Old Covenant, and is the one which, as He declares to them, He prefers and accepts. . . . He turns His back upon the arch of triumph which rises before Him, and resolutely decides in favour of the pathway of shadows which leads to heaven through the grave. . . . Jesus had the power to ascend: He exercises a free choice, and prefers to descend and take the road to Jerusalem."—(Pp. 112, 113. The whole section, pp. 110-114, should be studied.)

they had just been set to learn, that their Lord and Master must suffer and die. It was not only their own great loss which was apparently involved. A suffering Messiah was, and still is, to the Jew a stumbling-block. And they, too, looked for a kingdom rather than a cross, and could ill reconcile themselves to the idea that the cross stood in the way to that kingdom. Hence it was that Peter, even immediately after he had witnessed his good confession, could not endure when his Master began to speak of His sufferings and death, and even ventured to remonstrate with Him. Graciously therefore was it granted to Peter and his companions to witness this manifestation of their Master's glory, and to hear the voice from the cloud, bearing testimony to His Person—that Person which they were now being taught to connect with thoughts of shame and death; and even to find that the thought of death entered into and did not darken the glory of that hour, but was rather the very centre of that glory. For Moses and Elias were talking with Him upon the same theme which He had been opening to them. They “spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Nor did those who were privileged to witness it forget that sight; nor was its lesson lost upon them. More than thirty years after, Peter thus spoke of it: “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount” (2 Pet. i. 16-19). John also, doubtless, had it in his mind when in his Gospel he wrote (i. 14), “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” And may we not believe that its remembrance was also with them when they were called not only to testify of Christ, but also to do and to suffer for His sake; when John stood by the cross, and acknowledged his Master hanging between two malefactors, by accepting the charge of His mother, as he afterwards bore the martyrdom of a long life of waiting; when Peter stood forth and preached Jesus boldly on the day of Pentecost, or patiently endured for His Name's sake bonds and imprisonment, and at last was content to die upon the cross; and when James sealed his testimony with his blood, slain by the sword of Herod.

I close with suggesting a practical lesson which we may learn in connection with the words of St. Peter, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles.”

Apart from the mistaken view of the claims of Jesus compared with those of Moses and Elias, which seems to be implied in the proposal to build tabernacles for *all three*, these words surely indicate the same shrinking from suffering, the same failure to comprehend the necessity of the Cross, as his former "Be it far from thee, Lord." Here was the kingdom begun on earth; heaven opened without the key of suffering. Their poor and despised Master was surrounded by excellent glory. The "spirits of just men made perfect" held communion with Him, and they were admitted into that holy fellowship; and the light of the presence of God was over them all. There had been enough of strife with an evil world in the past; and those new sayings haunted him; and the future looked dark and threatening. Let them return no more to the vale of tears—the scenes of sorrow and toil. Let them dwell here always, and make this their abiding-place. "Let us make three tabernacles." But he knew not what he said. Such rest is not, save in foretastes like this, to be sought on earth, but in heaven: such unalloyed bliss is not given to abide with man on this side of the grave.

The afflicted father, with his child possessed of a foul spirit, awaited their return at the foot of the mountain—emblem of a world lying in the wicked one, which was still to be reclaimed by the blood of the Cross—a kingdom to be won in battle for Christ, by His followers; a field wherein they must do their day's labour before their rest should be earned.<sup>1</sup>

Peter's spirit seems to have been that which has manifested itself in every age of the Church—in the hermit who separated himself from contact with the outer world, and the mystic whose religion consists in contemplation rather than action. We are told that three monasteries were afterwards built on the very mountain, as men believed, where Apostles were not suffered to construct three booths. Such a life must always be unreal and selfish, and one far removed from the resemblance to His, Who if He spent the night upon the mountain-top, alone with God, all the day long "went about doing good." Contemplation is to prepare us for action; and communion on the mountain-top for the battle of life below. Life is too short, and its work too great for indulgence in vain aspi-

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<sup>1</sup> "It was not for Peter to construct the universe for his personal satisfaction. He had to learn the meaning of Calvary no less than that of Horeb. Not in a cloud of glory or chariot of fire was Jesus to pass away from them, but with arms outstretched in agony on the accursed tree; not between Moses and Elias, but between two thieves who were crucified with Him, on either side one."—(Farrar's "Life of Christ," vol. ii., p. 29.)

rations and visionary day-dreams. We are not to live to ourselves, but to the Lord, and in living to Him we are to live for others. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" was the question which sent the orphaned disciples down from the Mount of the Ascension to their work in the busy streets of Jerusalem. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil," was the Lord's prayer for His followers, as His charge was—"Ye are the light of the world;" "Ye are the salt of the earth,"—indicating to them and to us the path of duty.<sup>1</sup>

The Transfiguration and its sequel may well remind us that for the servant, as for his Master, glory comes through suffering, and life springs from death.

Yet let us make the "Holy Mount" a school of prayer, and learn there whence alone cometh our help. Does not the Transfiguration speak to us of the blessedness of seasons of retirement for communion with God, and of the power of prayer to elevate the soul's vision above the mists and shadows of a world of sin, and care, and strife, and to animate us for the work and the welfare, and, if God so will it, for the suffering too, by Pisgah glimpses, in which it is given to the eye of faith to see the King in His beauty, and to "behold the land that is very far off"? Nor is it given alone to see but also to receive. Still while men pray the strength comes: the witness is borne to their spirits from heaven; the glory falls upon them, and they go back to their work and their warfare calmed, and comforted, and invigorated. The Transfiguration teaches us that honour from God comes to those who pray. "As they pray," beholding the glory of the Lord, they too are transfigured, transformed, "changed [the word in 2 Cor. iii. 18 is the same in the Greek, *μεταμορφούμεθα*] into the same image from glory to glory." The process of transformation surely though secretly advances until the day of "the manifestation

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<sup>1</sup> Since writing this paper, I have met with the following version of this lesson, interpreted by Rev. Dr. Matheson in his delightful little book, "My Aspirations" (*Heart Chords*, Caswell and Co.). "The answer to me (for I too have had this desire) and to Peter is the same, 'Arise and depart, for this is not your rest.' You were not made for the mountain, but for the valley. The place that is good for you is not the sphere of exaltation, but the sphere of ministration. See, at the foot of the mountain there is a demoniac waiting to be healed. He cries to you from the valley of humiliation! Shall you fear to enter into his cloud of suffering? Is it too prosaic a thing to be a healer of common pains? The cloud that hides the vision is itself thy glory. The storm that breaks thy mountain tabernacle is itself thy rest; it calls thee down into the valley to minister with the angels of God. Thou canst build thy tabernacle there!" Pp. 42, 43.

of the sons of God." "Then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

At best such seasons of rapture are only brief and infrequent, and may be, as is often the case, thrown into vivid contrast with the shadows which constantly linger beside the light. They who are privileged to enjoy them may soon meet with discouragement when they go down from the hill into the valley of spiritual strife and temptation, even as the disciples descended to a world of sin, and disputing, and unbelief below. It is then encouraging to remember that the happy converse and communion which excited Peter's mistaken and impracticable desire only typifies the state of fellowship with the Lord, and participation in His glory which awaits all His true disciples, and which will not only realize but infinitely surpass their most enlarged desires. For if a brief glimpse of the heavenly glory so overpowered and entranced the disciples on the Mount, what will be the blessedness of those who "come to Mount Zion—the heavenly Jerusalem—to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant," where they shall see Him as He is, and be with Him and like Him for ever! Oh! how good shall it be to be there, abiding not in a quickly dissolved tabernacle such as Peter would have made, but in a building from God—"an house not made with hands—eternal in the heavens"!

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#### ART. IV.—PESSIMISM.

**P**ESSIMISM may be popularly described as philosophy turned sour; and the smaller the beer the sooner it turns sour when the electric tension of the weather is severe. Pessimism for ever contemplates the back of the canvas on which the tapestry is wrought. It dwells by preference in darkness, feeds on darkness, is a product of darkness, and to darkness returns. All the greater names of human tradition are against it. The entire array of the fathers and masters of human thought, since philosophy first awoke in the half-legendary Seven Sages, condemn it with one voice. The sages of feeling, the poets, who interpret humanity to man on its sentimental side, are equally unequivocal and (with one modern exception) unanimous in its condemnation. Tap the spring of