

Sunday Afternoon

The Shadow of the Cross¹

By Lyman Abbott

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.—
1 John iii., 16.

The words "of God" are put in by translators. "Hereby perceive we the love"—as though it were the whole, the universal love, the only kind of love there is in the universe—"hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

The first impression that one gets from looking out upon life is that it is the law of nature that the weaker should be sacrificed to the stronger. And this conception has been wrought into the scientific formula—"struggle for existence—survival of the fittest." Life appears to be a struggle, in which the weakest are either crowded to the wall and destroyed, or live only as they sacrifice themselves to that which is higher. Thus, the mineral world is taken up into the vegetable and absorbed by it, and the vegetable is in turn taken up into the animal and absorbed by it, and the weaker animal is taken by the stronger animal and becomes his food and is sacrificed to him; and in the whole realm of natural life the weaker, the poorer, the feebler, the lower, is sacrificed for the higher, the stronger, the richer. And this natural conception of life is wrought out in all the earlier stages of society in the social organism. Thus the subjects came bringing their gifts to the king; the pleaders came bringing their gifts to the judge; the church came bringing its service and its homage to the priest; the serf owed allegiance to his sovereign lord. Life seemed to be based upon this scientific basis, though the scientific basis was not understood. The lower gave gifts to the higher; the lower was sacrificed for the higher.

Now, Christianity brings a message that, at first sight, seems to be radically inconsistent with this. The message of Christianity is: The weak are not to be sacrificed to the strong, but the strong are to sacrifice to the weak; the poor are not to be sacrificed to the rich, but the rich are to sacrifice themselves for the poor; the ignorant are not to be sacrificed to the wise, but the wise are to bear the burden and suffer sacrifice for the ignorant. And so all through life, the higher are to serve the lower, the poorer are to serve the richer, the stronger are to serve the weaker. So Christ interprets the law to His disciples: "Whoso will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." So Paul interprets Christ to the Ephesian elders: "I have showed you how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." You know that water grows heavier as it grows colder, until it reaches a certain point; if it continued to grow heavier as it grows colder, it would sink to the bottom, and ice would form at the bottom of the rivers and ponds, and freeze upwards, and all fish that are therein would be destroyed: but when it reaches a certain point the law changes, and the cold water comes to the top and freezes there, and so a cover is made on the top and becomes a blanket for the life that is underneath. So, when this law of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, that is the source and inspiration of progress up to a certain point, is carried to that point, then suddenly the law is reversed, and the element of conscience comes in, and the element of love, and the law that the feebler and poorer are to serve the stronger and wiser gives place to the law of love—the law that the strong shall bear the burdens of the weak, and the rich shall bear the burdens of the poor, and the wise shall bear the burdens of the ignorant. Life is like a body of men climbing up the surface of a precipice,

and in paganism every man puts his foot on the shoulder of the man below him and climbs up, and the weak stay at the bottom; but in Christianity every man that gets the vantage-ground a little above his fellow-man reaches down and takes hold of his fellow-man and helps him up. Both make for progress, but the Christian law of service of the weak by the strong makes for progress better than the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest.

Now, Christianity has gradually wrought out this revolution in human thought and life. No longer do we consider that people are the servants of the king; we say the President is the servant of the people; and the problem to-day between government of the machine and by the machine and for the machine, on the one side, and government of the people and for the people and by the people, on the other, is the struggle between paganism and Christianity; it is a struggle between the old, false conception of government, that the strong are to get the benefit and the many are to be the servants, and the modern and Christian conception, that the many are to get the benefit and the few that seem to be at the top are to confer it. The universities were originally monasteries. Men went there simply to study and to live a housed and quiet life. Christianity has revolutionized these monasteries and converted them into universities in which the fellows and professors go, not to keep their life in seclusion, nor to promote their life, but to impart their life to the college students. In the old cathedrals of England the priests fenced off part of the cathedral where they conducted their worship; they were the recipients, and the people stood outside and looked on; and in Durham Cathedral there is a great cross set in the stone floor, near the outer door, and no woman in the olden time could come nearer the chancel than that cross. The Church was not for the women; it was not for the men; it was for the priests. Now the priest is for the congregation, not the congregation for the priest.

We all now recognize this as good ethics, but I want to show you this morning that it is good theology. For the old religious conception was that people must bring their offerings and their sacrifices to God. The old conception was the pagan conception; and it required men to bring their offering and their sacrifices to God; they were feeble, poor, ignorant, unworthy. God was the great Sovereign, God was the great Judge, God was the grand, noble One, and these poor, ignorant ones must come and give their gifts to their God as they came and gave their gifts to their king, and as serfs to their lord. And that notion has wrought itself into theology, so that men imagine that Jesus Christ died as a gift to God. We were not rich enough to give the gift, our lives were not holy enough, and so this exceptionally holy life was put on the earth that there might be something which could be given; and when we take this life, and say, We will make it ours and give it back to God, then we are giving something worthy of him. Do not you see that this is turning Christianity upside down? The law that the strong shall serve the weak, and the rich shall serve the poor, and the wise shall serve the ignorant, is the divine law, and because God is the greatest of all and richest of all and wisest of all, therefore he is the servant of all. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not a sacrifice which man makes unto God, or which one God makes unto another God, or which God with one hand makes to God's other hand, or which one aspect of God makes to another aspect of God. It is not a sacrifice to God at all: it is a sacrifice *by* God *to* men. God brings the gift into the temple, and man comes empty-handed. It is the rich One bringing his wealth to the poor; and the wise One bringing his wisdom to the ignorant; and the strong One bringing his strength to the weak; and the living One bringing his life to the dead.

Two noble girls belonging to the Salvation Army go down into the East Side of New York; they go to the very lowest of the low, or they want to; they find the very worst spot they can find in that great city—and you cannot find a worse spot on this globe than you can find in some places in New York City. They take off their Salvation Army dresses; they lay aside their Salvation Army character; they find a poor room; they furnish it with

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poor furniture—they have broken chairs, imperfect tables, a third-hand cooking-stove—everything is as in the rooms about them, except that their room is clean; and they live there, that they may carry their life to the people living there under those conditions, that they may carry life where there is death, that they may carry cleanliness where there is filth, that they may carry inspiration where there is despair. They hide their personality that they may offer their gifts. So Jesus Christ comes into life, laying aside the robes of his office, laying aside his divine glory, and coming—what?—that he may be our sacrifice to God? No! no! That he may be God's sacrifice to us; that he may witness God's love for us; that he may bring God-life to us. He laid down his life, not for God, not for justice, not for law; he laid down his life *for us*.

Think what that meant! He knew all the privations and limitations of poverty. A Western minister a few years ago shocked all reverential Americans by saying that Jesus Christ was a tramp. It was false: because a tramp is not only one who is impecunious, and goes from place to place, but one who goes from place to place because he is vicious or lazy, and wishes to live on other people. But if to be without a home, to be dependent upon the charity of others, to travel from village to village, if that were to be a tramp, the statement would have been true. All the limitations that belong to absolute poverty he took upon himself that he might give—not that he might get. And, with that, all the loneliness of life. He was alone. His own friends did not understand him. As a cultured woman going down and living in the East Side would be without any companionship whatever, except as now and then she might escape her thralldom and seek some cultured companionship in her old home, so Jesus Christ went ever and anon away from his disciples up into the mountain-top, that he might have a little quiet companionship with God and the spirits of the Old Testament saints—the only real companionship he ever had. He knew all the limitations of power. With all the strength, all the wisdom, of the divine, he laid them aside, because, by being imperfect in the possession and manifestation of power and knowledge, he could better serve those whom he wished to serve. He walked the sea, but never to help himself. He made bread, but never to feed his own hunger. He never wrought a miracle save for others. He knew, too, the hate and hostility of men. The men whom he loved turned against him. He knew what it was to face abhorrent and abhorring faces. He knew what it was to inflict great wounds on those that did love him. I do not think the hardest part of Christ's life were the wounds that he received; they were the wounds he inflicted. You remember how, when James and John came to him and asked to sit on his right hand and on his left, he answered: Can you drink of my cup? can you be baptized with my baptism? and they said, We will—you remember the pathos of his sad reply, You shall drink of my cup; you shall be baptized with my baptism. Ah! it was not the nail driven into his quivering hand and foot; it was the looking down upon the mother that stood before him as he hung upon the cross, and seeing the sword in her heart, and knowing that he had himself plunged it there. I know nothing in life harder than this: to inflict a wound on one you love because duty requires it. That he did. He knew the reality of temptation; and the purer the soul the harder and the bitterer temptation is. There is a certain sense of shame that comes upon any man, and upon any woman, at times, just because they are under temptation. The recognition of any possibility of sin, the recognition of any possibility of contest or conflict, is hard for the pure soul to endure. He knew it all. I do not enter into the mystery of it; but his temptations were real temptations. He knew what it was to bear the sins—not only the sorrows, but the sins—of others. As a father feels shame in the shame of his child, as a child feels shame in the crime of his father, as the wife suffers more for the sin of her husband than the husband suffers himself, so He suffered for the sins of those he loved. Every heart that has ever felt the sorrow and shame of another's sin may know a little what Christ suffered for

you and for me. He came into our life that he might bring his life into our life; he came not that he might appease God, not that he might offer a gift which you and I could give to God; he came as the strong One that he might give strength to us in our weakness, and the rich One that he might give wealth to us in our poverty, and the wise One that he might give his wisdom to us in our ignorance. He came as one comes who comes down into the homes and abodes of the poor, the ignorant, the despised, the outcast, to make their home his home, their condition his condition, their life his life—that he might give his life for others. He is God's gift to us. And we shall never understand the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ until we in some measure understand this.

The old theology represented Christ as a sacrifice for God. And men have reacted against that, and try to sweep away the notion of sacrifice altogether, and think of Christ only as a teacher and an example. We shall not understand his mission until we come to see that his coming into life is God's sacrifice to men; that he has entered into life, and taken the burden of life, and borne the sorrow of life, and felt the shame and the sin of life, in order that he might give life. If I could paint the shadow of the cross, I would not paint it with a yawning boy, the shadow the token of his weariness on the wall. Have you not seen the mother stand with her arms outstretched, and the little child, seeing the mother's arms outstretched, run quickly to the mother that the mother's arms might clasp him to her bosom? I would put the shadow of that mother-love upon the wall, for God's love reaches out to lay hold upon the weakest, the feeblest, and the poorest; and the cross of Christ is that shadow thrown upon earth of that inviting and embracing love.



Righteous Hoarding¹

By Lyman Abbott

It is quite as often the minister as the monarch who governs the State. Pitt, not George the Third, was the real ruler of England; Richelieu, not Louis the Thirteenth, was the master of France. Joseph is made by the Pharaoh of the hour absolute master in a realm whose government has always been that of an absolute despotism. To maintain such a position for a quarter of a century is itself a test of greatness. To maintain it, a foreigner, over a nation that despises foreigners as the Egyptians did; to maintain it, a monotheist, over a nation whose idolatrous faith was so inwrought into the national life as it was in Egypt; to maintain it, executing a policy of heavy and burdensome taxation, not for present use, but for future contingencies—this must have required a political sagacity such as belongs only to great genius. Cromwell prime minister of Spain in the palmiest days of Jesuitism would hardly involve a greater political and religious contradiction than Joseph the prime minister of Egypt. He has been sharply criticised for his course in selling to the people the grain which he had hoarded, instead of giving it to them.² But in forming a moral judgment respecting his course, three things must be considered: (1) He lived before the age of democracy. The nation was the unit. The individual existed for the nation, not the nation for the individual. He is to be measured by considering the question whether his actions showed a disinterested endeavor to accomplish the best results for the Egyptian empire. (2) No warning on his part, and no exhortation, would have induced the people to save for themselves. In spite of the greater intelligence of our own times, in spite of the lessons of experience, and the increased facilities for saving furnished by our banks, bonds, evidences of debt, and other modern conveniences, it is still difficult to persuade the majority of men to provide in the time of their prosperity for an anticipated time of adversity. If Joseph had trusted to inducing the people

¹ International Sunday-School Lesson for April 22, 1894.—Gen. xli., 38-48.

² Gen. xlvii., 14-26.

to save for themselves, the majority of them would have suffered, if not died, in the time of the famine. (3) Having laid up a store of provisions, it was far wiser for him, far better for the kingdom, far better for the people themselves, that he should sell, not give away, when he had provided against a day of evil. This is, indeed, I believe, one of the lessons to be taught from this story; the lesson against indiscriminate giving to the heedless and shiftless—a giving which demoralizes and pauperizes those who receive. With this brief explanation, I desire to use this incident in the life of Joseph to inculcate and illustrate two moral lessons.

I. Hoarding is sometimes righteous. The mistranslation of Christ's instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on," has wrought much mischief, and would have wrought more but for the fact that no external authority can suffice to overcome a natural and right instinct. The word translated "take no thought" is, literally, "be not divided in your minds"—that is, be not distracted, drawn in different directions, as one is a part of whose thought is spent upon the problems of love and a part upon the problems of self-interest. It is this double-mindedness which is the secret of all anxiety. What Christ says to his disciples is, Be single-minded, devote your lives to the service of God in the serving of your fellow-men, and God will care for you.

Now, this is not inconsistent with the spirit of thrift. One may lay up in the present for the exigencies of the future if he is doing this in the spirit, not of selfish greed, but of thoughtful benevolence. The birds, to whom Christ referred as an example, exercise forethought, and haste away to warmer climates before the cold weather makes the northern climate too inhospitable for their dwelling. God himself stores up for future use. The prairies, the mines, and the forests are the granaries where God has stored for the future of his children. Thrift and benevolence are not inconsistent; on the contrary, thrift is essential to benevolence, for he who has nothing can bestow nothing.

II. But this hoarding, to be righteous, must not be hoarding for its own sake. Wealth, whatever its form, is useful only as it is used. The power to acquire and the power to retain must always be subordinate to the power of wisely expending. The man who accumulates a great store only to hoard them in his barns and storehouses God calls a fool;¹ but if he stores up to-day that he may have to use to-morrow, he is a wise man. Accumulation for accumulation's sake is both a sin and a folly. Joseph was not a fool, because he did not store up in the granaries of Egypt that he might take his ease, drink, and be merry, but that he might have wealth to supply the wants of the people when they came to be in want. He gathered the food of the good years that the food might be stored² for use in the seven years of famine, "that the land perish not through the famine." Acquisitiveness is righteous only when it is in the service of love.

III. I would emphasize, too, the lesson which I have already incidentally referred to: the best way to help any one is to help him to help himself. A great deal of the so-called indiscriminate charity of our times has been wholly pernicious. Giving something for nothing is always a dangerous business. It is better to sell garments for insignificant prices to the poor than to give them away. It is better to provide cheap meals than free soup-houses. If a gift is really bestowed in love and received in love, love sanctifies the gift; but impersonally giving by tickets, and wholesale giving by free and public distribution, demoralize and degrade. It is better for a man to go hungry or co'd than to exchange his manhood and self-respect for food and clothing. In spite of the caustic criticisms on Joseph's course, I believe that we might learn a lesson of wisdom from him, imitating, not his particular method, but the principle on which he acted and the spirit by which he was inspired.

¹ Luke xii., 20.
² Gen. xli., 36.

The Religious World

Methodist Conferences This is the season for the gathering of the hosts of Methodism in the vicinity of New York. The New York

Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church began its sessions on Wednesday, April 4, in the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, Seventh Avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street, Bishop J. H. Vincent presiding. The New York East Conference began its sessions at the same time in the Nostrand Avenue Church in Brooklyn, Bishop Charles H. Fowler, of Minnesota, presiding; while at the same hour the Newark Conference began its sessions in St. Luke's Church, Newark, Bishop William X. Ninde presiding. The most important item of business which has come before any one of the Conferences up to the time of our writing concerns the proposition for a constitutional change in the Discipline of the Church touching admission of women as delegates to the General Conference. A resolution presented by the Rev. Dr. James M. King was unanimously adopted by the New York Conference. It seems that there was some irregularity in the way the subject had been presented for action. Omitting part of the preamble, we quote its substance and the resolutions as follows:

Whereas, In submitting this extraordinary proposition to the annual conferences the General Conference did not adopt it legally by a majority vote of two-thirds so as to ask the members of the annual conferences to concur in its own action, nor did it "recommend" the adoption of the amendment proposed, but plainly indicated a desire that it be not adopted; therefore

Resolved, First, That, waiving all questions of the expediency of the admission of women to the General Conference, we declare our judgment that such admission should not be secured or sanctioned by any method that wears the suspicion of irregularity or inadequacy.

Resolved, Second, That we deem it expedient not to vote on said proposition till after the General Conference shall have legally adopted it and "recommended" the concurrence of the members of the annual conference.

Resolved, Three, That action on said proposition be and is postponed till after the next General Conference.

Nothing in this action indicates what the final decision of the Church will be, and yet we have no doubt that, sooner or later, women will be admitted on the same conditions as men. The most noticeable event in the sessions of the New York East Conference was the lecture of Professor Mitchell, of Boston University, which he had been specially invited to present. His subject was "Profit and Loss: A Reckoning with Biblical Criticism."

**Professor Mitchell's
Lecture**

Professor H. G. Mitchell, of the School of Theology of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, is one of the most competent critical scholars in our country—a man whose scholarship is recognized both in this country and abroad. Probably there is not in the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States a more eminent scholar in his special department. The New York East Conference has done a very wise thing in introducing special lectures into its programme, and it is an indication that the great Methodist Church has its face toward the future when it invites one of its ablest scholars to speak before it on such a subject. The general thought of Professor Mitchell in his lecture was briefly as follows: Taking for granted that the critical view of the origin of the Old Testament has prevailed, there has been a real gain for the Hebrew Scriptures in the change. This opinion is held by almost all critical students of the Bible who are also evangelical in theology, and this fact leads Dr. Parker, in his latest book, the object of which is to controvert many of the positions of the "higher critics," to say: "We are dealing with brethren, not with enemies; with believers, not with infidels; and with men whose conception of the case may some day prove itself to be right." It is not for us to enter into any extended outline of Professor Mitchell's address, but we do desire to emphasize our appreciation of the wisdom of the Conference in introducing such lectures into its programme, and in inviting the men best able to speak on such themes to present them.

**The Purification
of the Press**

A Committee of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends has issued a letter to editors and journalists in behalf of the purity of the press, which is one of the most practical movements in the line