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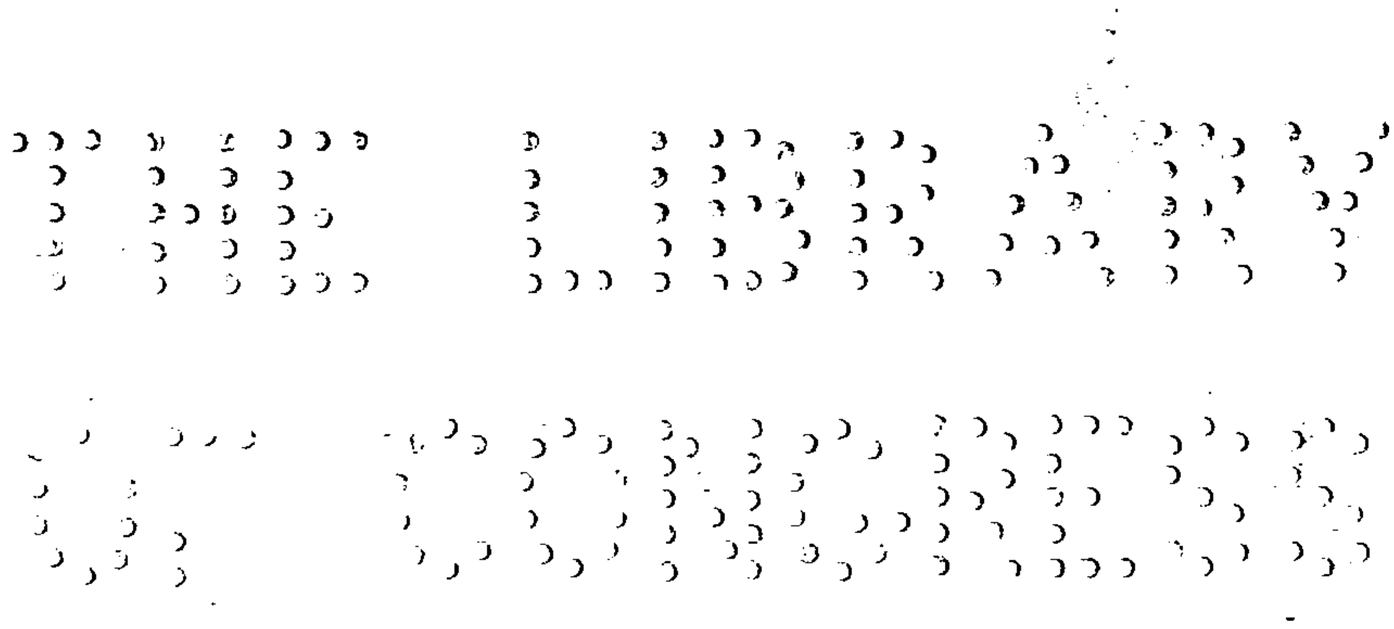
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STUDY TO BE QUIET

BY

EDGAR W. WORK

SECOND EDITION



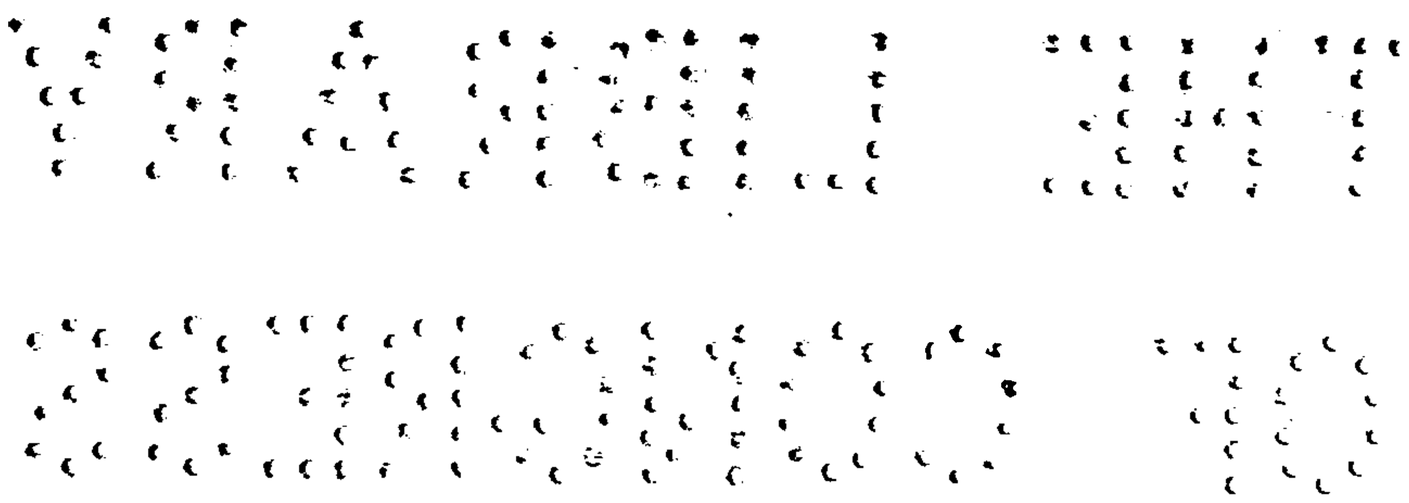
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DEDICATED

TO THE

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVORERS

OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE

"QUIET HOUR"

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A Pauline Sentence

Study to be Quiet*

I

A Pauline Sentence

It contains but four words—in the Greek but two. Nevertheless it is a little sentence to be lingered over, to be meditated upon, to be carried in the heart as a *vade mecum*. What Emerson said of Montaigne is still more true of Paul the apostle. His words are "vascular and alive." "Cut these words and they would bleed."

May they bleed thought and help for us as we think of the need of Quiet, and of the things that belong to Quiet, as the necessary background of the Christian life. It is trite to say that our age is hasty and restless. But it has not yet been too often said that Christianity's message in part to the world is a message of quiet strength and rejoicing amidst turmoil and haste. The Christian faith, to be sure, is dynamic in its influence upon men, yet at the same time it is ever summoning

* 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

men back to the silent sources to the steadying processes of faith, where life may obtain its poise, secure its own legitimate privacy, inherit the gifts and graces of Quiet. The terminology of the subject—"silence," "stillness," "calm," the "inner life"—has a strange sound in the ears of these noisy generations.

Perhaps it is, as a commentator upon one of the modern mystics says, because it is "not a truth for all markets." It must be confessed indeed that Quietism, in its many historical manifestations, has produced frequent exaggerations and vagaries. Yet even Carlyle, whose ruggedness clears him of the charge of mysticism, thought that men are apt to be too busy, too scant in silence. "Silence," said he, "is the element in which great things fashion themselves."

The apostle Paul was no mystic. He writes indeed of being carried into the seventh heaven of vision and he has much to say of the deep things of the Christian faith. Yet he is always the most practical of men, teaching ever the insistence of task, as well as the importance of vision. Paul illustrates a combination of qualities. He puts duty with doctrine, action with vision, service with thought, works with faith. He calls men to a personal and growing acquaintance with Jesus Christ their Lord, in order that they may go out

and do His work with loving hearts. Keenly alive as he is to the need of activity, Paul also insists upon Quiet, such Quiet for the Christian as is described by Fellowship, Meditation, Communion, Growth. The great apostle himself must have his quiet years in Arabia before he could begin his apostolic labors.

There were special reasons for writing thus to the Thessalonian Christians. In the New Testament there are three separate words meaning to be quiet. The one Paul uses in writing to the Thessalonians means a general condition of mind, a state of heart. We infer that there were some restless Christians in Thessalonica. Some indeed deserved, as he thought, the name *busybodies*, persons who inclined to make religion a matter of noise and agitation.* Some perhaps who had neglected the regulation of themselves and the discharge of their own duty in running about to do many things. This is evidently the point of his frank injunction, "that ye study to be Quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands." It is the emphasis of the deeply personal quality in religion. It is a call to them to build themselves up in their inner life, and to do their own duty.

He means, in short, to bring them back to the quiet sources of a Christian life, as if he would

* 2 Thessalonians 3:11, 12.

say, Lead a quiet and dutiful life. Do the task that belongs to you. Be not ambitious for place, and be delivered from officious meddlesomeness, from strained and unnatural exertions, from a noisy, clacking life, full of the sound of machinery. Do your work quietly. Let your life be deep. Be something more than a *petty* Christian, living a meager life of slim and insignificant incident. Act strongly without. Live deeply within.

This Pauline counsel is very valuable to-day. The Christian of to-day needs silence, including, as the word does, whatever is of the inner life, whatever is preparatory in the heart, whatever represents the deepening of the soul's experience. Study to be Quiet means, not less activity, less doing, but more thought, more worship, more prayer, more secret, personal education of the heart in grace and knowledge. There is nothing morbid, mystical, or ascetic about this claim.

Nothing can take the place of spiritual fellowship. We must desire our Shepherd to lead us "beside the *still* waters," where we may find time to feel, to grow, to understand, to resolve. No Christian can afford to neglect the culture of the heart. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." A Christian character grows as the temple was built, without sound of hammer or axe, or "any tool of iron." The roots of the spiritual

life are in such silences as trust, prayer, meditation, and obedience.

There is a peril of the spiritual life which should make us afraid. It is the peril of emptiness. It is possible to exercise many functions of the Christian life, and at the same time to illustrate the truth of the poet's line—

"'Tis life of which our veins are scant."

The hands may be full and the heart empty. It is possible to be "rich in outward incident, but poor in inward experience." Outward incident is plentiful enough, organizations, committees, telephones, engagements, letters, meetings, testimonies, and plans. These are well and good.

In the midst of all these let us make sure that we are not "poor in inward experience." Hear the call to silence. Study to be Quiet. Find time to live in the heart, to think, and to pray. Learn the value of the Quiet Hour. Practice the presence of God. Come often to the Church of the Burning Bush.

This is the meaning that we find in the Pauline sentence for the Christian of to-day. Study to be Quiet. It is no separative or mystical counsel. It lays stress upon preparation. It emphasizes the inner as the condition of the outer. It summons the believer again and again to the store-houses of God. It accentuates the quiet things in faith. It

does not deprecate a resourceful life, but it urges hat the springs of life shall be deep, not shallow. With the emphasis of the modern conditions which every Christian must face, it calls us to all that is sweetest, strongest, most personal, most real, in our holy faith.

And the first lesson is the lesson of the Quiet of Trust.

The Quiet of Trust

II

The Quiet of Trust

One of the great words of the Christian vocabulary is *Trust*. It is impossible to express in cold and formal sentences the richness and the power of Christian Trust. Putting aside all severe or metaphysical definitions, there is one thing that we wish to see clearly, that Trust is essentially the *quiet of the soul before God*. The Psalmist has expressed this thought very beautifully, "Be still and know that I am God." Distrust is agitation: Trust is stillness. It is at bottom the contented feeling that accompanies the heart's confession of God's greatness, goodness, power, and wisdom.

Says the Psalmist again, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Luther gave this sentence a literal rendering. It means, he said, "Be silent to God, and let him mould thee." The child of God should learn to be silent toward his Heavenly Father. No intellectual rights, nothing of his own mental or spiritual freedom, is taken away from him. Yet he counts it all joy to "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience

of Christ.'' In the joy of trust the mind loses not its intellectual freedom, its imaginings, its questions, but loses its querulousness. In the system or plan of trust life organizes itself about the great centers which God has furnished, such as Love, Wisdom, Power, Sacrifice. Trust is the deep satisfaction of the heart with God, and with the known qualities of the divine character. "When I saw Theseus," said Iole, "there was yet something that I desired that Theseus did not give. But when I saw Hercules, my heart was at rest, and I was silent before him." When God the Father is revealed to the soul by faith, the soul is contented, asks for nothing more, is silent and glad and confident before Him. This is Trust. It is very simple, yet it is the sublimest act of the mind.

Trust is not based upon understanding, but upon love. We do not trust God because we know all about Him. We know that God is love, and we love Him because He first loved us. Then Trust comes. Philosophy exalts understanding. Christianity exalts love and trust. Religion, indeed, has an intellectual element, and seeks understanding along with trust. But in religion faith is higher than knowledge. A religion that consists of clear thought, of cogent argument, of piled-up knowledge, a religion that insists upon knowledge

to the last degree, may be as strongly joined as a piece of carpentry, but it will be as cold and glittering as an icicle. No one puts an icicle into his bosom to obtain warmth. The warmth of religion comes by trust. The analogy of human loves and friendships is sufficient. If love and friendship be not something more than a measured, mechanical knowledge, if there come not to the heart something of the *abandon* of trust, then love and friendship are only empty names. So the heart wishes to give itself up, wishes to make a great venture with God, is contented to go with Him even beyond the reach of its own knowledge. It is this venture of faith, this sweet privilege of trust, that brings a glow to the heart.

Victor Hugo wrote to his little daughter Didine from the seashore: "I have written your name, little daughter, on the sands to-day. The tide will rise and the waves will wash it away; but nothing can wash away your name from my heart." Trust is the soul's deep conviction that God is our Father and that He will never lose us out of His sight. Many waters cannot quench His love. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

There are two laws: one is the law of knowledge; the other is the law of love and trust. Knowledge is strong and hard, full of imperious demands. Trust is warm and tender and eager,

glad to walk as a little child in touch with the Father's hand. When Paul writes of the "peace of God that passeth all understanding," he means the peace that is not based upon understanding. The peace of knowledge is based upon understanding. The peace of God is not dependent upon understanding. We may lack in knowledge, and at the same time be rich in peace. Thinking of this fact of the superiority of trust to knowledge, Lessing wrote his great sentence: "He who does not lose his reason in certain things has none to lose." Trust is not contrary to reason, but it is often higher than reason. Religion is deeper than thinking. It is down in those depths of life where the blood runs red, where all tender and formative feelings of the soul reside. "The heart often has reasons," said Pascal, "that the Reason knows not at all."

One who visited the poet Wordsworth relates an incident of the conversation. They were enjoying together a magnificent mountain view in the Lake country. The poet remarked that travelers boasted much of the Swiss mountains, because they were much higher than the English. "I reply," said he, "that the clouds gather so low on them that half of them remains commonly out of sight." The visitor remained silent, and the poet repeated the statement in different forms. At

length Wordsworth said, "You cannot see those boasted Swiss mountains when the clouds hang low?" "Certainly not," replied his visitor. Then, after a pause, the poet's characteristic veracity prevailed, and he added, "But I must admit, you know that they are there." Trust is *knowing that God is there*, even though understanding may not fully see.

The meaning of the quiet of trust begins to emerge. The heart knows God for what He is, and is still before Him. Because of the silence of trust the heart ceases to be torn by fears or doubts. Trust is the enemy of fear. God "sets a higher value on our trust than on our trembling." We stand upon grounds of friendship with him. You will not doubt your earthly friend whatever appearances may say. So the Christian is quiet in trust, knowing that his Friend is true. He will even say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Trust is the secret strength of religion in the heart. The jars and changes of life will come, but they cannot shake our trust if it is as deep-seated as it ought to be. They who lose their faith when the conditions of life change, and the facts of life seem to stand awry, have no depth in their trust. It is shallow and too easily exhausted.

In the Bible the mountains are frequently taken as the symbol of God's character. "The

heights of the mountains are His also." "In His hand are the deep places of the earth." "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." When we lift up our eyes in joy and confidence unto the hills, we know that they have deep foundations. But the real strength of the mountains is hidden. Ruskin remarks that every great mountain is founded on a hundred mountains buried out of sight. The Cross itself stands "towering o'er the wrecks of Time," because of its "root among eternal things." What a rebuke this thought of the "abiding facts" of God is to the shallowness of our trust. A writer speaks of how the stars wheel to their stations in the sky, making "the poor world-fret of no account."

We need a deep and rich Trust in God that cannot be easily defeated. We need a great Quiet in the heart, that storms cannot reach. When the generals of thought, of trouble, of sin, lead their armies against us, we shall have a refuge in the heart's trust. We shall go back and rest in the stillness of the heart, and wait until the storm is overpast. We shall say in the quiet of trust, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." The secret of permanency in the Christian life is in having an established heart. Twice the Psalmist declares, "My heart is fixed," and again he declares of the good man,

The Quiet of Trust

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Study to be quiet in your soul toward God. Win for yourself the silent victories of trust. Pray that you may come to know the majesty and the calm of a simple, undisturbed Trust in God. Blessed is the servant of God who has mastered the art of being quiet before God. "When the soul has laid down its burden at the feet of God, it feels as if it had wings." Hence the life of trust is no mere passive existence. Rather it is full of all beautiful actions.

The Psalms are pre-eminently the literature of trust. Read especially the thirty-seventh, the forty-sixth, the fifty-sixth, the fifty-seventh, the sixty-second, the eighty-fourth, the one hundred and eighth, the one hundred and twelfth, and the one hundred and fifteenth. Luther spoke of the Psalms as "the copy-book of the saints." He who will catch the spirit of these devout hymns of the Psalmist will know the alphabet of trust. The Christian should be as intelligent as possible. Let him know history, literature, science, if he can, but let him not fail to understand that a large part of the spiritual training of a child of God is the education in trust. In God's school, which must needs have its discipline as well as its instruction and entertainment, many school-masters are seek-

ing to lead us into the quiet ways of trust in God. Study to be quiet in God's school, and to learn its lessons faithfully and well. Many a glad surprise will come to God's servants who learn to be silent unto God permitting Him to mold them.

"O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." This is the closing strain of that sublime song of trust, the eighty-fourth Psalm. What are the particular blessings that come with Trust? They are three: Submission, Joy, and Stability.

The first blessing of Trust is SUBMISSION. Admit, Submit, Commit, Transmit!—this is the way our education runs. Submission comes early. It must come early, and must last to the end. Trust is an act of humility. Put God *over*, and yourself *under*. Religion without submission is like a tripod with a broken foot. A fraction grows as the numerator increases and the denominator decreases. Increase your numerator. Lessen your denominator. More of God, less of self. "He must increase! I must decrease." Yet this is very far from being the self-effacement of those helpless and inhuman Oriental philosophies, that find the climax of religion in Annihilation. Christian submission to God is of another spirit. It is not the absorption of self that self may be lost, but the submission of self that self may emerge again

with new meanings, new potencies, new elevations in life. The type of this submission is that of Christ, who was "highly exalted," because he "humbled himself" and became obedient unto death. It is that of the apostle Paul also who said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is ours to learn obedience, as the Master did before us. And when we have learned obedience, we come to that new elevation in life which represents no loss to ourselves, but an inexpressible gain instead. This is the blessing of trustful submission to God. It is the gift of power. It is the exaltation of humility. It is the afterglow of Trust

Have we really submitted ourselves to God in Christian trust? Have we truly committed our ways unto God? Have we gone with Isaiah into the Temple Court, and said unto God, "Here am I, Lord, send me"?

If any of us seem to ourselves to be lacking in that new and potent elevation of life which carries with it no pride of perfection, no selfish joy of superiority, but which is the unmistakable sequence of a humble self-surrender, then it is probable that we have such questions as these to face and consider. The way of power for the child of God is the way of submission.

And out of the heart of submission comes JOY, which is the second child of Trust. Nothing brings

such quiet joy to the heart as trustful submission to God. We are uneasy, anxious, troubled, the waters of our souls tossed like an angry sea. We come and lay our lives, our ambitions, our plans, upon the altar, and God gives us his peace. Peace through submission! Joy the handmaid of Trust! "Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Many of God's servants rob themselves of the greater measures of joy because they are not quiet before God in submissive trust. They plunge like wild horses, strain like a ship at its moorings. They live too independently, marking out their own course, asserting too freely their own wills, putting their own ambitions first. They seek their own, not the things of God. But the way of peace is the way of submission. The surprise of Joy comes when you are willing to give God the highest right to your life. The Quiet of Trust and Submission will bring the stillness of Joy. Then you will know the spiritual interpretation of the calm that God gives after storm. "Then are they glad because they be Quiet." Jesus spoke of this as "my peace." It is the peace that Jesus had, and which he gives to his disciples. With this quiet peace of trust the Christian may look out upon the world—

"With an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of Joy."

The Quiet of Trust

The final blessing of Trust is STABILITY. A mighty trust produces a mighty strength. The strength of the Christian is born of command, not his own, but God's command. The strength of the world is noisy and demonstrative. It is the strength of nature, of will, of organization. The world does great things by its strength. But only a man of mighty trust in God could say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." The strength of God's kingdom is quiet, yet efficient, like the drawing of gravitation. The Master of the kingdom knew this strength when he said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men." Such strength, such stability, is deep-seated in the will and nature of God. The Psalmist felt that he should "not be moved" because he trusted mightily in God. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," says the prophet. The writer of Hebrews finds cheer in the thought that we have received "a kingdom which cannot be moved." When this has become a personal assurance, then the final blessing of Trust comes. Blessed are they who keep ever their quiet confidence in God. They shall inherit strength. The most masterful thing in life is Trust.

There are some things from which God's children should be delivered by the Quiet of Trust. One of these is worry. It is admitted to be diffi-

cult to live a calm and simple life amidst a great complexity of affairs. There is a louder call for the Quiet of Trust to-day than ever before. Worry, Fret, Distraction—Trust should at least limit the authority of these masters of men. Too many Christians wear themselves out in the paltry and petty worries of life, making their lives to depend upon the state of the weather or upon the price of wheat, worrying "about every heat of their body," concerned with "a thousand peering littlenesses." This is not of faith. Trust has something better for us than the thralldom of fear. The freedom of God's children is not mechanical and legal merely. It is vital. Let Christ take away your bondage, bringing you into his "glorious liberty."

And Haste—Trust should deliver us from haste. We do not forget that "the King's business requires haste." Eagerness, energy, enterprise, are prime qualities in the kingdom. Yet God's kingdom is built, not by the hasting, restless spirit, but by the patient and trustful soul. The prophet speaks the word of the Lord, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. *He that believeth shall not make haste.*"

He that believeth that life hath sure foundations, laid of God, shall not be given to the wearing haste of life. He that believeth shall not run to

and fro in search of rest. He shall not be shifting hither and thither like the sand. He shall not be a creature of agitation and unrest, torn apart by trouble, broken in pieces by anxiety. There is a great gift of calm in Christian Trust. There is a mighty power of restfulness in being Quiet before God.

Restlessness is far too common among God's children. We are beset by all manner of fears. Thoughts of success and failure, thoughts of gain and loss, thoughts of confidence and fear, encompass us and limit our freedom. The world knows naught of rest, and many who are in God's kingdom have lost their message of quiet for the world. There is a striking lack of spiritual poise and contentment, and trust seems not to bring its steadying power as it ought.

The trouble is that the "vertigo of civilization" has laid hold of us. The whirl of affairs has reached the hearts of God's people. "Things are in the saddle," as Carlyle said, "and they ride men." The tasks of life are become labor, and the "quiet and peaceable life," of which the New Testament speaks, loses its attractiveness for us.

Let the child of God study to be quiet. Let not the haste and weariness of the world possess us. Let there be for us something more than affairs. Let us find again our secret of rest, and

cult to live a calm and simple life amidst a great complexity of affairs. There is a louder call for the Quiet of Trust to-day than ever before. Worry, Fret, Distraction—Trust should at least limit the authority of these masters of men. Too many Christians wear themselves out in the paltry and petty worries of life, making their lives to depend upon the state of the weather or upon the price of wheat, worrying "about every heat of their body," concerned with "a thousand peering littlenesses." This is not of faith. Trust has something better for us than the thralldom of fear. The freedom of God's children is not mechanical and legal merely. It is vital. Let Christ take away your bondage, bringing you into his "glorious liberty."

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Let the child of God study to be quiet. Let not the haste and weariness of the world possess us. Let there be for us something more than affairs. Let us find again our secret of rest, and

deliver its message to the restless age about us. Do your own work. Do it well. Do it to the utmost. And keep your fellowship with God as the background of work. Go back again and again to the spiritual sources that feed life, to the quiet things in faith. Live a simple life in Trust. Mark the example of the early disciples, "that small transfigured band whom the world could not tame," of whom it was said, that they ate "their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Changed as the conditions of life are since apostolic days, there is still a mighty call to the children of God to go in and out before men with the steadiness and joy of a trustful spirit, unhasting and unafraid, as if repeating to the world the words of Christ, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

The Quiet of Prayer

III

The Quiet of Prayer

Let the Pauline sentence bring us another message about the quiet things of the spiritual life. Let us study to be quiet in prayer. Let us come to know the Quiet of Prayer.

So large a subject as Prayer may be viewed in many different aspects. The simplest of all definitions of Prayer is this: *Prayer is being alone with God.* It is coming into the Quiet of God's Presence. It is the time, the hour, the moment, when, more than any other time, we study to be quiet before God in our spirits, that we may speak and be spoken to. It is that intimate, spiritual communion and conversation when they—

> "Whom the heart of man shuts out
> Straightway the heart of God takes in,
> And fences them all round about
> With silence 'mid the world's loud din."

The quiet of prayer is the sweetest, most reassuring experience that ever comes into a Christian's life. In the quiet of prayer God isolates the soul. Even more, in the quiet of prayer, God insulates the soul, and throws about it the separative protection of his own Presence. It is the time when we

go aside with the Father of our spirits, as when Christ took the deaf and the blind by the hand and led them apart from the multitude. In such an hour the soul is cut off from affairs and is shut in with God. The Apostle Peter's counsel to "watch unto prayer" really means "be sober unto prayer." (R. V.)

This call to be alone with God in the quiet of prayer is imperative. Heed it not, and the troubles of the soul begin. One of the perils of the spiritual life is the peril of being so busy, so full of the rush and tempest of life, that the heart gives slight attention when "thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way.'" Much of our life must be lived with the multitude, for that is the place of testimony and of service. But at frequent intervals the Father desires to have each of his children alone in a quiet place. God can do nothing for the prayerless spirit, because the prayerless spirit denies him the opportunity of the quiet of prayer. If you count it not worth while to be often in the sacred solitude of Prayer, you should not expect that God will work his miracles of grace and transformation in your soul. Christians often wonder that their spiritual state does not improve. They should consider whether they have not too often been careless of the "one clear call" of God to observe those moments and

hours when "none but God is near." Live always with the multitude, giving God no opportunity to have you alone, and you may know more of the life of the world. But you will know less of the life and power of God. Prayer is not our opportunity so much as it is God's opportunity.

The quiet of prayer is possible, indeed, amidst the noises of the multitude. They who have learned this fine art of momentary solitude with God may have the quiet of prayer anywhere, may surround themselves with a fine and beautiful silence even amid a thousand tumults. Gracious indeed, and efficient ofttimes, are those "flashes of silence" that strike across the fog and strain of our busy life, and tell us "how near is glory to the dust." But God's economy of prayer provides more often for the privacy of prayer, as if to enforce the duty of being alone with God, in form as well as in fact. In the Bible, time after time, we see God dealing with his servants alone. The great events of sacred history, the personal calls and inspirations, the opening of new vistas of faith and life, transpired in the times of solitude with God. Moses at the burning bush, Jacob under the stars at Bethel, Gideon at the threshing-floor, Isaiah in the temple-court, Peter on the house-top, Saul on the road to Damascus—these are a few of many instances of the divine method of isolation. It is

the method of Jesus also in dealing with souls. Nineteen private interviews of the Master with souls are recorded in the gospels. It is even his method with himself. "He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Jesus sought privacy in prayer, and the quiet of prayer must have a literal meaning for his disciples as well. Public prayer, however necessary and useful we find it to be, can never be substituted for the higher economy of private prayer. Therefore Jesus said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

Take time to be alone with God. Make holy places in life, establish your tent of meeting, where in the shadow of silence you can have the literal quiet of prayer. Be not so full of the haste of life as not to demand for yourself the opportunity of the tryst of love, the hour of spiritual recognitions, the place of that serious girding of the soul for conflict, that overflow of joy, which every servant of the high things of God sorely needs amidst a trying world. Neglect the quiet of prayer, and you will come to know the bitterness and poverty of the spiritual life instead of its sweetness and its wealth. Let no child of God be too busy to pray. Too busy to pray! Is the body too busy to breathe?

The Quiet of Prayer

Is the tree too busy to grow? Is the wheel too busy in its turning to observe its points of rest? Is the sun too busy in its impressive march, too occupied with shining, to pause at the summer and winter solstice? Neither should the Christian be too busy to pray. Prayer is the soul's rest in God's presence, the opportunity to gather new energy for life. Prayer is the soul's solstice, when, in a time of separation from the world, the soul looks backward and forward, and most of all, upward. Failing to observe this appointed rest, the soul loses the ministry of God that can come only in silence. He who is too busy to be alone with God will never come upon the quietness and strength of God, and will be left a prey to his own and to the world's noise and unrest. "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The best of all blessings, a spiritual life, may escape, while God's servant is "busy here and there."

However strong the call to the life of action, to the life of public service and testimony, back of that call is the imperious call to the life which Tennyson describes as "the silent life of prayer."

In the quiet of prayer we learn to be more grateful for God, as we come to know Him better. In the quiet of prayer we come to share a sacred familiarity with God, and to rejoice in those spir-

itual realities which are spoken of in the churches. In the devotional classic "Holy Living," the author, Jeremy Taylor, speaks in the third section of "The Third General Instrument of Holy Living," and this he declares is "The Practice of the Presence of God." The Christian will need no argument to prove that God is near, yet he needs to practice the nearness of God. In the quiet of prayer the nearness of God is interpreted very sweetly, very helpfully, to the soul, so that the soul comes to know the nearness of God, not as a fact merely, but as an experience.

This is because prayer destroys the sense of distance, brings the throne of God within touch of the hand, within sound of the voice. A famous musician thought that one day's lack of practice removed his art a little further away from him. A painter testified that continuous sketching made him less a painter, and he must go back to his studio to learn color and shade again. Something fine goes out of our lives when we cease to pray. It is the sense of the divine nearness. It is the ineffable Presence, the Shekinah of the Tabernacle, that no child of God can describe, and that no child of God can live without and retain the secret of his joy. If the Church stopped praying for a day, God would seem further away—

"The King of some remoter star."

The Quiet of Prayer

There are many believers who lose a great deal of joy out of their lives because the nearness of God—such nearness as makes it easy to speak to Him—is but faintly realized. They are like those who "suffer in sight of land." They are like those whom Seneca describes in his essay on Tranquillity, as not unhealthy, but as "too little accustomed to health." There is such a thing as not being accustomed to the Presence of God. This always clips the wings of prayer.

But prayer persevered in and enjoyed brings God near, "nearer than hands and feet, closer than breathing." If one should sit down in a cable office and send a message across the sea, the sense of distance would at first be overpowering. There would be a feeling of utter strangeness and unreality. But after a while this would pass away. If one kept sending messages day by day, he would grow to feel as if he were talking to a neighbor. This, in a faint illustration, is the way we should grow in the use of prayer. Prayer is simplest and truest when it is accompanied by the sense of being gently swept into the Presence of God, whose welcome is the welcome of a cordial Friend. With such a Friend the feeling of distance is lost, and Prayer seems like talking out of the heart to the heart of another, the quiet opening of a door between the house below and the house above.

But this familiarity of prayer is not the familiarity that breeds contempt. Rather is it the kind that brings a high reverence to the soul, and leaves a mark of something finer and better than ourselves upon our nature, as when a mother comes in the night and leaves a kiss upon the face of her child, saying,

"Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"

Something indefinable, something precious, remains after the quiet of prayer, like the sensation of a pleasant dream, like the recollection of beautiful music, like the sound of a dear voice.

Ought not this quiet and familiar friendliness of prayer to relieve it of burdensomeness? When prayer becomes a task, its sweet privilege disappears. But prayer should not be a task. There should be nothing laborious, nothing hard, about prayer. Prayer should be as easy as breathing. One breathes without resistance, and when breathing becomes a task, either the air is poor, or the lungs are enfeebled. Prayer is truest when it meets with no resistance. The poorest way to pray is merely to "say" one's prayers. The word suggests the running of machinery. Beware of the emptiness of form, the hollowness of sound, the dryness of habituality, the machinery of method. Beware of losing the spirit in the act. Seek the

very life of prayer, which resides evermore in the thought of being quiet and alone with God. A believer who is under the dominion of this transforming thought can never be content merely to "say" his prayers. Which of us counts it a task to sit down and talk confidingly with a friend?

The bane of prayer, that which often makes it bare and cold and difficult, is lack of attention. The weak brother of the hand is the third finger; the weak brother of prayer is Attention. Traced to its source lack of attention may turn out to be lack of love and trust. Never does the Christian need an "arrest of thought" so much as when he is in prayer. Study to be quiet in the mind, in the heart, in the whole inner man, when you pray. Fix the heart upon God. If prayer is laborious, repetitious, vague, incoherent, meandering like a sluggish stream across a tangled meadow, without freedom, joy, or inspiration—and who does not know this distressing phase of prayer?—it is because the mind is choked with obtrusive thoughts, or wanders unchecked in distant places. When you kneel to pray, think of what prayer is, being alone with God. Command the heart to be still before God. Call the mind in from its wandering, and require it to give heed. There is a gift of imperious resolution which every Christian ought

to cultivate in relation to prayer, lest prayer may become a frittering, helpless mental exercise, that has no stronger support than the support of custom. Prayer will become joyous when it is redeemed from inattention and mechanical formality, and enters into the feeling and freedom of a realized friendship with God.

In the quiet of prayer we realize more and more the gladness of dependence upon God. Philosophers have sometimes tried to make a philosophy of prayer, relating it to the concepts of Time and Space and Being. The philosophy, the logic, of prayer is personal. It is based upon a heart fact—the sense of need. Every order of nature is dependent upon a higher order. "I will answer, saith the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel." Mrs. Browning speaks of how the divine embrace "slides down by thrills through all things made." There are many lower supports for the soul, but the ultimate dependence is God. In this lies the naturalness of prayer. Not the hills, not nature, not humanity, is our help, but He who is the Strength of the hills, and of the whole earth. Prayer, then, is the heart process in which we rest ourselves upon Supreme Help and wait patiently for Him. It is not mere words. It is

feeling, it is attitude, it is leaning upon the One whose life and power are

"The fountain light of all our day,
The Master-light of all our seeing."

God does not so much give strength to his children in large gifts as he does by unseen degrees and by silent accessions in the quiet of prayer. In the fairy tale the child was left in a deep and dark place. But presently he found a hidden stairway leading up to light and safety. No trouble is so great but that the child of God may find in prayer a stairway leading up to God.

In the quiet of prayer we find life's solvent, obtain light, receive explanations, get our bearings anew for the journeyings of the day and of the night. It is a place of renewal, a time of illumination. In prayer we bring our work to God, our successes, our failures, our troubles, our perplexities, not alone to seek his help, but also to see by his light, so that the truth of what Eckhart said may be evident, "My eye and God's eye are one eye, one vision, one recognition, one love." If we do not receive express direction about our affairs, we shall at least see them in a calmer, whiter light, and shall find better interpretations. The photographer seeks a "dry light," the benefit of an uninterrupted medium. The Christian's "dry light" is prayer, where he may get the

personal revelation as to life that comes both with surprise and comfort to the soul. How often we rise from our knees saying, "I never saw it in that light before, and God's light is good." In prayer the Spirit seems to search the deep things of God for us, and we come to know as otherwise we cannot, "the things that are freely given to us of God." In prayer, therefore, as in study, is found the source of that spiritual wisdom of God's children which the world is bound to respect. For however skeptical the world grows about prayer, the world still confesses that in relation to the kingdom of light "the Christian on his knees can often see farther than the philosopher on tiptoes."

Frequenters of the wilderness affirm that there is a "woods madness," the kind of insanity that possesses a man lost in the woods. Fascinated by the deep shade, one who is under this strange spell will rush on and on and can scarcely be rescued even by force. A recent autobiographer tells how on one occasion, when he felt himself in peril of such mental wandering, he saved himself by sitting down and resting thoughtfully "until I felt quite calm." This is what prayer can do. It cures the mind of wandering. It restores the sense of direction. It opens a pathway in the wilderness. It saves us from the fatal fascination of our own self trust.

Prayer makes a new atmosphere for life. Hence there is an indirect benefit of the Quiet of Prayer which other men receive. Coming forth from the Quiet of Prayer into the regions of life's activity, with the spiritual sky washed as by rain, it is the privilege of the child of God to bring cheer and healing to the unconscious sadness of the world. If men said of Dean Stanley, that to go into his presence was like going out under a clear sky, if it was said of Louis Agassiz that ten minutes in his presence made a strong argument for the immortality of the soul—so should the world be compelled to confess of God's children that the gracious influences of the Quiet of Prayer produce a sublime simplicity, a joyous sanity and contentment, that make life every way richer and better.

An incident of Mr. Moody's life has been recently revived by a London preacher. He was asked to call upon a poor man in Dundee who had been bedridden for a long time. Mr. Moody went to take a blessing and got a blessing for himself as well. The sick man had grown wise and gracious by prayer. When the evangelist left the room he said, "I guess when the angels pass over Dundee they will stop at that house for refreshments."

Yet with all this said about the Quiet of Prayer, let it not once be supposed that prayer is a negative, mystical state, or attitude, whence the soul

looks out with helpless though eager desire upon the world of need. On the contrary, in prayer is born the life of inspiration and courage. Prayer is the rightful "poising of the soul between vision and task." It is the foe to dullness, to folded hands, to that kind of mental and spiritual indolence which passes the world with its need by on the other side. He who prays must also work. It is in prayer that we come face to face with our own highest ideals, confront anew from day to day the standards of the life in Christ, realize the limitations of the carnal and the freedom of the spiritual life, and gain ever new and transforming familiarity with those thoughts of God and man

"Which always find us young
And always keep us so."

The body grows old and decrepit, but prayer maintains the youth of faith.

What, then, is the place of prayer in the life of the Christian? In music the *Obligato* is not a mere accidental or occasional accompaniment, which may or may not be. It is that which is *obliged to be*, that which is indispensable in the proper rendering of a musical composition. Prayer is the Christian's *Obligato*.

The Quiet of Speech

IV

The Quiet of Speech

What if we find a very literal meaning in Paul's Thessalonian counsel and let it summon us to the quiet of speech? Not quiet speech, but quiet of speech, the quiet that is greater than the speech, that resides in the heart of speech, the silence that sometimes interprets the meaning of the kingdom to the world even better than speech. There are high meanings, yet most practical meanings, too, in the oft-quoted maxim, "Speech is silver, silence is golden." Among the many striking descriptions and symbols of John's apocalypse none is more impressive than that which accompanies the opening of the seventh seal: "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was *silence in heaven* about the space of half an hour." Shall we suppose that when the impressions of the time and place become too stupendous for utterance, when praise and worship have exhausted themselves, when heaven becomes too real for symbolism, for the limitations of expression, then the soul takes refuge in silence, as if to store up the material of utterance, to correct the imperfections of speech, by those quiet measures of the soul comprehended in one word, Silence?

Study to be Quiet

The Bible never belittles speech. On the contrary, it creates throughout an impression of the majesty and the potency of human speech. The command of the Greek philosopher to the stranger at his door, "Speak, that I may know thee," receives a more apt expression upon the lips of the divine Master, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." How wonderful man is: first, that he thinks; then that his thoughts may flow out upon the air in sounds, letters, syllables, words, sentences, sometimes as

"Linked sweetness long drawn out,"

sometimes like the thunder in power or the wind in roughness, sometimes like a stream from the mountain, rushing, dashing, leaping in the haste of its descent, sometimes tinkling like bells as it drops in the waterfall, or again resting quietly in calm and shadowy pools. The plainest speech of the most unlearned is no less than a marvel, especially when studied in the light of its revelation of the soul, its reproduction of the inner life. Since the world began men have prized the arts of speech, and have counted it worth while to gain power and grace of utterance, whether in oratory, in teaching, or in conversation. Hence those valuations of speech which are found in the scriptures. This, for example, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver"; and this, "A man

hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good it is''; and this from Isaiah, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.''

A thousand of our joys almost can be traced to the gift of speech, which daily blesses us and makes us a blessing. Silence grows oppressive; speech is relief and comfort. Silence is not necessarily virtuous. It may be the mark of indifference, even of duplicity. Sir Silence may conceal a world of ignorance, and may be the last man of the community to imitate. Certain useful adverbs come to our aid. Study *why* to be quiet. Study *how* to be quiet. Study *when* to be quiet. The Bible, with its customary fidelity, points out the limitations of speech, as well as its glories. It describes the perils of utterance, the frequent tragedies of speech, the unregistered crimes of the tongue. With great impressiveness Jesus summed up his teaching as to the responsibility of speech, the serious relation of words to his kingdom, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'' No careless art is this fine art of speech, in the view of the divine Teacher, to be exercised in haste, without thought, study, and deliberation. Rather is it an art that is to be accompanied by study, an art to be gov-

erned by spiritual laws, to be made *fine* indeed, an art to be carried up into the highest regions of the soul's life, even while it descends to the most ordinary service. All this accentuates the literalism of the Pauline sentence: *study to be Quiet.*

The underlying truth that needs emphasis is that Christianity does not consist of speech. Important as the utterance of Christianity is, it is nevertheless something far deeper than words, it is made up of thoughts that do

"Often lie too deep for tears."

The Christian faith can never be exhausted in words, can never be fully expressed in language. We must convince the world that our life is greater than our words, that the things that are not spoken are greater than the things that are spoken, greater than testimonies, greater than creeds and confessions. A gentleman speaks of being alone with Theodore Roosevelt when he had his first view of the Pacific Ocean. The President was deeply impressed, but "he said very little about it." The ocean is too great for words. In Christianity there are things that cannot be *said*, that simply *are*. In these realities that underlie utterance, in this quiet that resides behind speech, life must ever root itself and grow strong. The Christian stronghold is not words, but knowledge, experience. The apostle John seems to be thinking of the power

beyond words in Christianity when he writes of "many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." How often has this truth become personal to us, and we have felt that faith has brought sweeter things to us than we can ever express. We can never tell the world in words what Christ is to us. One who had journeyed to the famous Yellowstone and returned to describe it to his friends, paused often in the midst of his description to say, "But I *cannot* tell you—you must go and see for yourself." Other travelers who have journeyed within the region of Christ's awakening influence have come back to meet the world's inquiry and skepticism with an invitation, "Come and see." What we feel about Christ in relation to our inner life is indescribable. We only know that he is "all in all." There is something immeasurable in Christ, something that must ever elude rhetoric and eloquence. Christ is greater than our words, greater than our thoughts, greater than our imaginations.

It is true that we must be ready always to give "an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us." But the strength of this answer must be more than the strength of words and argument. Words alone cannot sup-

port the claims of Christ. There is a *quiet of speech* which must underlie speech, a manifest assurance, a bounteous joy, an unmistakable experience. "I know whom I have believed"—let the words stand alone and they are as empty as air. But back of these words put a heart that is evidently constrained by love, a life that is illuminated by the light of God that is in the face of Christ, and the testimony becomes living and powerful. It is the majesty of experience, the impressiveness of life itself, that constitutes the ultimate answer of faith. Know Christ in your heart, come into the intimacies of faith. Keep your life in touch with his spiritual ministry. Let your attitude in all things be that of one who has come to the Holy of Holies, and has been touched with reverence and awe. Make your life sacred and glad and Christ-like. Have somewhat behind your words—knowledge, experience, reality—that shall express more than you can ever say, that shall tell the world of a deeper meaning in faith than you can ever put into technical formulæ or connected argument. Let us call this the quiet of speech, the unspoken behind the spoken, the silent force of experience, the massive power of a redeemed life. Show the world that the heart of a Christian contains more precious things than can be put into speech. In one of the most remarkable books of the genera-

tion, the autobiography of a soul shrouded by nature in a ten-fold darkness, that was led forth by the skill and devotion of human teachers into a marvelous light, Helen Keller writes this sentence to a friend, "If the light were not in your eyes, you would understand better how happy your little Helen was when her teacher explained to her that the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched, but just felt in the heart." Is it not an echo of the apostle: "The things that are not seen are eternal"? In all this we are summoning the believer, not to vagaries and bigotries of experience, not to the false insistence of the "inner light," not to any indifference to outward expressions and confessions; we are simply calling the believer to the recognition of the regal fact in Christianity—that it must be known and felt and experienced before it can be truly spoken, that even after it is known and experienced, there is something in faith that defies words, that "eye cannot see, nor ear hear." Therefore study to be quiet in your faith. Know more. Feel more. Grow more. Let your life be deep, "rooted and grounded in Christ." Believe in a gracious testimony, and believe still more in a gracious experience. Speak! but study all the while the quiet things of faith and life that are behind speech.

The gracious art of listening is one expression

of the quiet of speech. There is so much for the Christian to learn. A world of spiritual knowledge and experience is awaiting him. The "things that God hath prepared"—what plenty, what magnitude they have. The "manifold wisdom" of God has wrought in the gospel. "My Father worketh hitherto," said Jesus, "and I work." No wonder that the Beings who dwell above should desire with angelic curiosity "to look into these things." But what a summons comes to the child of God out of this abundant preparation, to a studious and thoughtful life, to a life of listening for the truth of God. There is much to speak, but there is more to learn. Let no man think that the Christian life is shallow, or lacking in intellectuality. Every faculty of the soul may be fully occupied in the life of faith. Let us here make an earnest appeal for more thoughtfulness in the Christian life. Think! Meditate! Study! Listen! "He who speaks sows, he who listens reaps." The Greeks spoke of Epaminondas as the man "who never says anything, but will listen eternally." There is a danger in the Christian life that is worthy of care. It is the danger of giving out without taking in. This is one peril of the Christian ministry. Week in and week out, as the years go on, the servant of God in the ministry continues to sow by speech. Soon exhaustion will come unless with

each day's sowing he continues to reap by listening, to store the mind and heart by study, meditation, and prayer. It must be frankly said that many Christians seem to realize but faintly the necessity for the quiet life of study, the silent, inward growth of the soul in grace and knowledge. They live a haphazard, accidental, hand-to-mouth Christian life. They snatch their spiritual food as they go much as travelers eat hasty lunches in railway stations. In the midst of a thousand affairs of the busy age they give little heed to the call to study to be quiet. If Moses had plead the needs of his flock and had failed to turn aside to see the bush that "burned with fire and was not consumed," he would have been like some of God's servants to-day whose lives are occupied every inch with the world, and who find no time to live in the soul, to have companionship with God, to look into the heart of spiritual truth, to heal the wounds of the world by the hygiene of a spiritual life. Hence some of God's children are in that precarious state of spiritual exhaustion that must infallibly rob them of joy, and at the same time bring feebleness to the kingdom. With us, as with the keeper of Jethro's flock, it will be when we "turn aside to see," that God will call to us and will give us new measures of knowledge, new quickenings of life. Go not too hastily on your way to pause at the

Burning Bush. If life shall not find time to "take root downward" how shall it have power "to bear fruit upward"? The command is the military word, "Attention!" Give time to God.

One of the best ways to reap by listening, to grow wealthy in quiet, is to walk thoughtfully and observantly along the varied pathways of God's Word. Write upon the title-page of your own Bible, "Be still, O my soul, and listen to God." Why should Bible-reading be mechanical and laborious? Why should it not be joyous and vitalizing, full of buoyancy and expectation? The naturalist wanders up and down the pathways of the forest, listening to the voices of nature, lying sometimes beneath the trees, peering among the bushes, resting by the side of still waters, and filled all the while with the exhilaration of search, the joy of discovery. A botanist in the Western mountains has just been rewarded, after twenty-five years' search, by finding a certain rare mountain flower. Why should not God's people take delight in his Word, read it with relish, search it with expectation? What a land of surprise it is to him who in the love of God wanders in the meadows and climbs the rugged mountains of his Word, looking eagerly into its great depths, gazing reverently at its inaccessible heights, stooping often to pick a flower, resting betimes beneath the shadow of some

great rock, listening ever for that voice that speaks to the soul, the voice that no man can ever mistake for a human voice. Listen to whatsoever teacher can bring you nearer to the kingdom of grace. But more than all, listen to God, be led of the Spirit, be taught in his Word. There are hours of Christian vision when the eye of hope sees large numbers of God's people, especially of his young servants, keenly alive to the Word of God, delivered from the drudgery of searching it, knowing the joy and plentitude of it, living and working in the stimulating atmosphere of it. The realization of such a vision would mean spiritual wealth to a multitude of hearts, and fresh power to the church of God. Until the children of God find time to listen to God in his Word, they will neither reap plentifully for themselves nor store up abundant blessings for the lives of others. If Chrysostom was right in saying that "many of our evils come from not knowing the Scripture," may we not believe also, that to know God's Word is to multiply our joy and usefulness ten-fold? But no mere mechanical knowledge of the Bible will suffice for this, no mere facility in quotation, no mere skillful manipulation of the rosary of words, verses, and chapters. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" is the advice of the apostle. Enter into its life and movement, find its spirit, its

atmosphere, get the *feeling* of the Book, live in the love of it.

"To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language."

So with the Bible. All this emphasizes the need of time, of quiet listening and study. Study to be quiet with God's Word. "Stand thou still a while that I may show thee the word of God."

There is a princely Christian habit of reserve in speech which may be reckoned as the highest literalism of the quiet of speech. Many persons spend much time in studying what to say. Let us spend some time also in considering what not to say. Study to be quiet. Among many prayers, the Psalmist utters this one, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." A Frenchman paid a simple compliment to his friend. "He had a great talent for silence," he said. When Charlotte Brontë had finished "Shirley," she wrote, "May God give me grace to be silent until I must speak again." The talent for silence is not the least among the talents that are to be cultivated in the kingdom of God. How many, alas, hide this talent and use it not!

The art of gracious speech is difficult, but the art of being silent is more difficult still. The preacher declares in Ecclesiastes that "there is a

time to keep silence.'' The apostle James devotes a chapter to the unmanageable tongue.

The New Testament in many places points out the perils of speech, counseling ''sound speech,'' advising to be ''slow to speak,'' not to speak evil of men, to speak with love, to put away jealousy, bitterness, and faction, to speak with grace, ''seasoned with salt.'' Many writers have recognized, with the Son of Sirach, that ''the tongue of a man is his fall.'' The great Bishop Butler composed a plain-spoken sermon on ''The Government of the Tongue.'' Old John Trapp averred that the tongue is set midway between the head and the heart that it might take counsel of both. A peasant came to a monk to be taught the scripture. He began with the Psalm, ''I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue.'' The peasant went away to practice it and never returned.

The keeper of a dog kennel gave a striking reply to the question, ''Are they as hard to manage as people?'' ''No,'' he said, ''but they would be if they could talk.''

It is not too much to exalt silence into a Christian virtue. We can serve God by speech, and we can serve God also by silence. God's children should know the law of the reserve of speech. Study to be quiet. ''Silence is the most massive thing conceivable,'' says Dr. Burton, in the Divinity

Lectures. "It is strength in very grandeur. It is like a regiment ordered to stand still in the mad fury of battle. To plunge in were twice as easy." Carlyle intimates that a rich find awaits him who will study the silences of Cromwell. One would like to know more about Seraiah, of whom the prophet Jeremiah, according to the King James version, tells us a notable thing. "This Seraiah was a quiet prince." There is a Celtic proverb that says, "Melodious is the closed mouth."

Should not the tongue be a Christian, too, as well as the head and the heart? The princely Christian law of reserve in speech bids us do some sharp work with our unchristianized, our heathen tongues. Put away censorious and scornful speech. No man, thought Carlyle, can safely live in an atmosphere of contempt. Put away gossipy speech, which is as careless of the reputation of a man as that pecking bird of the woods is careless of the welfare of a tree. Put away bitter speech. The dove is the proper type of the Holy Spirit, for the dove has no gall. Put away unkind speech. Let the "law of kindness" be in the tongue. Put away angry speech. "When one of you is angry, sit down; and if the anger still endures, lie down." Put away hasty speech. "The world is rankling from hasty speech." Put away unclean speech, whatsoever has a taint upon it, for the "wisdom

that is from above is first pure." Sublimate speech. Let it reflect the fineness of the spiritual kingdom. "I have received the laurel," wrote Tennyson of Wordsworth, "greener from him who uttered nothing base." Equally fine was the ideal that he set before the world in his description of that king,

"Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it."

Finally, consider the perfect example of Jesus Christ. Study the silences of your Lord and Master. "Never man spake like this man." Yet Jesus never seems to say too much. The first thirty years of his life were silent years. One sentence only is recorded belonging to those years. The gospels indeed record many discourses and conversations of his active ministry. But the impression never passes away, as we read the gospels, of a quiet source of strength that is more than the power of speech. Greater than the sweetness and force of his discourse, greater than the miracles themselves, is the miracle that Jesus himself was. There is no other argument so strong for the quiet force of Christian character as is found in the character of the Divine Founder of Christianity. Not his words alone, but He Himself is the center of the Christian religion. His life is greater than anything that he said. Or better, his life is the background of all that he said. There were times

when "he held his peace and answered nothing." He practised the reserve of speech. Study the gospels to note what Jesus did *not* say, as well as what he did say. Mark, for example, his comparative silence towards Judas. Observe the kindness of his words to the Samaritan woman, even while he revealed her sin to her. The ministry of Christ—how quiet, how forceful, how much a product of himself, how far beyond the mere potency of speech it is.

Doubtless the Master is willing to share this secret of his quiet, mighty ministry with his disciples. He will give us, if we are willing, the power of a Christ-like life, and this will often speak when words are lacking.

The Quiet of Service

V

The Quiet of Service

Let us look at the Pauline sentence once more, and let it remind us of the Quiet of Service. Among the collects of the Book of Prayer none is more appropriate than that one in which the people pray that "they may be cleansed from all their sins, and *serve thee with a quiet mind.*"

Christianity is not a form of mysticism. It invites meditation, but it does not end in meditation. It insists upon an inner experience, but it insists also that experience shall result in something more than a fervent heat of the soul. It demands that the soul shall look out of its windows and see the harvest-field. It deprecates folded hands, and empty visions. It presents the task of faith, as well as the joy of faith. It frames the idea of happiness in the thought of duty. Turner, the artist, counting atmosphere in painting everything, said that he wished he could get along without trees altogether. But trees, houses, birds, animals, and human beings in a picture stand for action, for life. A thoughtful writer says that he went into the wilderness, into isolation from humanity, to find spiritual life, and found "the dullest form of intel-

lectual or spiritual existence." No man can live well by isolation. Spirituality grows by exercise, by contact, by service. Hence it is that the final word of Christianity is *Service*.

It is first an Old Testament ideal. Even kings were servants of Jehovah. Pre-eminently it is a New Testament ideal. No one can open his heart to the spirit that pervades the New Testament without confronting the idea of Service. To read the New Testament without grasping this formative idea would be like "untwisting the colors of the rainbow." Everywhere about this little Book, which Ewald once said "contains all the wisdom of the world," there is a permeative feeling, a movement, an atmosphere. There is an irresistible power that sets everything in motion, that "turns the world upside down," that brooks no obstacle of land or sea, that knocks at the gates of cities, that stands unafraid in the presence of earthly thrones, that operates expansively by an inexhaustible dynamic of energy and action. As long as the people of God continue to live in the atmosphere of the New Testament, they will continue to be aggressive and forceful. It is the spirit of the Book.

Nor is this spirit of service that inhabits the New Testament a mere indefinable influence: it is the spirit of the Divine Person who moves through-

out the New Testament, from the Manger to the Cross, from the Cross to the Throne on high. His humiliation is stated in such terms, "He took upon him the form of a servant." When he was yet a child in the temple he voiced his conception of his task—"I must be about my Father's business." The gospels record the busy life of the Son of Man. How full of toil were his three years. A passion for service possessed him; he willingly obeyed an irresistible impulse. "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day," he said. "The night cometh when no man can work." Never was there a more impressive definition of opportunity. Even the Saviour of the world was limited in time and place. He saw the shadow that crept towards him, but nothing could make him falter. He had the Messiah's work to perform. It was the joy of his heart to do this work. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish his work." Throughout his ministry he was training the Twelve in the spirit of service. His miracles were for the benefit of his disciples as well as of those who were healed. They saw him in these wonderful works as the servant of mankind. For the most part he permitted his ministry to testify silently to the spirit of service. A few times he spoke of it, as when he said, "I am among you as

He that serveth.'' In that connection he pointed out to them that the pre-eminence they were to seek should be that of service. He that is chief let him be a servant. At another time he said, ''The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,'' that is, to be a servant. On a still more notable occasion he showed his disciples how far the spirit of service could go in his ministry, by performing the menial work of washing their feet, and to this act he added a comment—''The servant is not greater than his lord.'' The world has had many servants, but Jesus Christ is the greatest, truest Servant of all.

The Master's idea of life became the inheritance of his disciples. It was an architectonic idea. About it as a formative, energizing thought the New Testament church was built. See, for instance, how it took hold of the Apostle Paul. It came to him first in his call—''I have appeared unto thee to make thee a *servant*.'' Often he spoke of himself as the servant—the bond-servant—of Jesus Christ. Those mighty, abundant labors of the apostle in the lands about the Mediterranean—there is no other explanation of them except the heroic enthusiasm of a high-born service. When he would sum up the spirit of the gospel, he said, ''We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and *ourselves your servants* for Jesus' sake.''

The Quiet of Service

Christ's thought of service has taken deep hold upon the world. It belongs to his church especially, but it is not confined to his church. It has spread abroad and has tempered and educated the spirit of the world. The highest types of life known in the world are they that have reflected the Christ idea. Usefulness has become, under the tutelage of Christianity, a note of the higher world-life. The best literature of the strong nations repeats it. We hear Mrs. Browning, for instance, saying—

> "Get leave to work in the world,
> 'Tis the best you get at all."

Enlightened government is not a form of mastery so much as it is a form of organized service. Human society in none of its forms indeed exists for itself alone. Through revolutions, through perils, through mighty transitions, slowly, painfully, the world makes room for Christ's idea of service. In the intense light of the Christian Gospel that is now burning in Christian lands, it may be frankly said that there is no real respectability of soul, no genuine worth and dignity of life, apart from the Christian idea of usefulness. There are many, let us thankfully acknowledge, who have caught the Christian spirit of service even though they have not openly confessed Christ. So permeative, so expansive, is the idea.

Study to be Quiet

Now, what is the nature of Christian service? The answer is in this final use of the Pauline sentence. Study to be quiet in service. How quietly Jesus Christ moved in setting up his kingdom. There was stir enough, but he himself seems free from noise and agitation. Deeply impressive are his Messianic poise and confidence. More than once he disapproved of methods that tended to display and demonstration, as when he forbade his friends to go bruiting the story of his miracles, and when he departed into a mountain to avoid the attentions of those who would make him king by force. World kingdoms are set up by the sword, with ceremony, with noise, and display. The kingdom of God comes "not with observation." In this singular manner of the establishment of the kingdom lies a great secret of God, which is also the secret of his people, and which none of his children can afford to overlook. This secret relates to the quiet of service. The forces that build the Christian kingdom are not noisy. There is no "sound of brass" about the Christian task, nothing blatant, nothing artificial, or officious. The kingdom comes neither by routine, nor by rule. Faith, Trust, Prayer, Service itself—all these are quiet forces, like gravitation, like the sun drawing water. Vast and wide-reaching as the enterprises of Christianity are, we cannot with safety forget that the

kingdom cometh "not with observation." To this truth of the quiet of service God's children must ever keep returning.

The most important meaning of the quiet of service comes to us when we realize the superiority of power to method. With a few exceptions the New Testament is not a book of methods. It is a book of power. The Acts of the Apostles, for instance, describing the thrilling progress of the gospel in Mediterranean lands, lays but slight emphasis upon method and organization. Christ himself gave the keynote for the early church when he said—"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." In due time method came to be considered, for the King's business could not be done without plan, and the children of the kingdom should be as wise as the children of the world. Nevertheless, it was evidently the purpose of the Master to show his disciples that the forces of the kingdom are spiritual, not material. This indeed was the prophet's announcement—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Method, plan, organization—all that is included in enterprise and energy—are very important for the success of Christian work, but none of these can take the place of spiritual power. Christianity is not a system to be worked; it is a life to be lived.

Study to be Quiet

Life is more than machinery; godliness is greater than method. The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy speaks of those who have "a form of godliness," but deny "the power thereof." Let us multiply the ways of working, but let us hold fast always to the spirit of service. God calls for enterprise in his servants, but never at the expense of spiritual power. The need of the church to-day is not for more method, but for more power, deeper personal consecration, higher devotion to the ideal of service, richer gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let us frankly face the danger that comes to the church in a day when outward forces are greatly increased. It is the danger of an unconscious denial of "the power of godliness." The busier we grow in Christian work, the greater the need of the quiet of service. Behind all your activity you must have your own quiet with God. Are you growing as well as working? Beware of the subtle temptation to be so much occupied with things to be done as to forget to live in your own life, to grow richer in faith, more gracious in spirit. As the tree is behind its leaves, as the depth of the ocean is beneath its waves, so the life of the Christian must be behind his work. Do not mistake the glamor and excitement of service for the real spirit of service. The spirit of service is fed by the deepening of the inner life.

The Quiet of Service

Consider the quiet of service in the light of fidelity, sincere devotion to duty, fidelity to the utmost, doing our best for Christ's cause—these are the equivalents of the quiet of service. It is required of Christian stewards, according to the New Testament, that they be found faithful. Asked his special reasons for thanksgiving, a thoughtful, Christian gentleman replied, "I thank God that I have an inclination to work." Happy are they who are devoted to their work, who count it worth while to be faithful, who honor their Master and themselves also by doing their work as well as they can. A "workman that needeth not to be ashamed" is Paul's description of the faithful servant. Mr. Spurgeon spoke of those who "scamp" their work for Christ, leaving it with many blemishes, while Mr. Ruskin, in the "Seven Lamps of Architecture," insists that Truth requires the builder to build beautifully and well in the obscure corners as well as in the open places. The shame of workmanship appears in the failure to be faithful in the least as well as the greatest. Blessed is the Christian who sees some nobility in being faithful on a committee. Blessed is the Christian who is afraid to leave his work undone.

There is nothing noisy or obtrusive about Fidelity. It is essentially a quiet force. Yet it is a force, and often a mighty force. Fidelity is some-

times slow, but it wins the race, as did the tortoise running with the hare. We note the fact that some lives seem to be endowed with quiet strength. It is usually the strength of fidelity. They have a high ideal of their task, and are willing to keep their hands upon the plow without turning back. At length the furrow is completed. Many things fail that are noisily begun, that might have succeeded by quiet fidelity. God needs a multitude of servants who are willing to practice silent fidelity. Do your duty. Do it quietly. Do it well. Do not idle. Do not lag. Do not dawdle. Do not neglect. Ask not for praise. Love not preeminence. Some day—even now in the heart—the divine voice may be heard saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Count it no small thing to have the satisfaction of a faithful life. Such a life will know no boasting, will be marked, indeed, by a rare unconsciousness of fame. The life will shine like the face of Moses, without the faithful servant's knowledge. Fidelity is the one quality in which all the world rejoices and the silent fidelity of the children of God is winning daily victories for his cause, where knowledge, riches, and eloquence are lacking.

Many servants of God must experience the quiet of service in another phase, and must be content to remain unknown in their silent fidelity to God. It

is the sphere of many to labor, not upon the heights, but in the valleys. Many, like Barnabas, must walk in the shadow of some greater Paul. Some must minister obscurely or by indirection. Even Christ pleased not himself in his rich service and sacrifice. Neither should his disciples selfishly seek their own ambitions. There are hidden values of obscurity, and there is a valuable ministry of the unknown, which help to build the kingdom. What was the name of the town-clerk who quelled the mob in Ephesus? Of the lad on the shore of Lake Galilee, who furnished the loaves and fishes for the Lord's miracle? Of the boy who saved the Apostle Paul from the plot? Of the four who carried their friend to Christ and let him down through the roof? Of the one leper of the ten who returned and gave thanks to Christ? Of the soldier who mingled the draught and gave it to the suffering Saviour? Of the wise men who came to Bethlehem following the star? Names drop out, but service remains. In the sixteenth chapter of Romans Paul mentions a list of disciples, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, "and the brethren which are with them." They were evidently not destined to prominence, but the intimation is that they were faithful. Fidelity is more than fame. God's kingdom, like a building, is made up of invisible as well as visible parts.

Study to be Quiet

There are many "uncalendared saints," and there is much anonymous virtue. Be willing to be unknown. But never be willing to be unfaithful. In Italian art galleries one often sees pictures labeled *Ignoto*, and is tempted to stop and pay tribute to genius that was illustrious though nameless.

In the kingdom the quiet of service often hides true greatness. It is the greatness of fidelity. Is there one kind of sainthood only, or are there not two kinds? One, the kind that is widely known and recognized in the world; the other, the kind that the world knows not, but that will some day be revealed. There is a glory of public service, and there is also a glory of obscurity. The background of both is fidelity. In the divine plan also our private fidelity may come into wider use. For the time it may be some of us are mere understudies, to work along faithfully and obscurely, preparing for something—we know not what. Work such as this requires a special courage of devotion: to attract little attention, but to be learning our part, to seem to be doing very little, but to be getting ready. The deeper truth about preparation is that sometimes we are preparing for a larger work than we know. The great work of the world seems to be done by those whom we call "principals." But not infrequently God calls the substitute up higher and gives him the work of a

"principal" to do. To be ready—this is also the meaning of the quiet of service. There was a king long ago who was called Ethelred the Unready. His very name is a warning. The "unready" are a heavy weight for the kingdom to bear.

And the servant of one talent—it is the quiet of service that emphasizes his usefulness in the kingdom. Our Lord drew a picture of men with talents. There is much interest in the man of five talents and in the man of two talents. But there is tragic interest in the man of one talent. This man who brought his earth-smelling talent back to his lord, saying, with a brazen courage, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine," is pilloried before the world as a man of impertinent folly. He had disregarded the Law of Use. The lord in the parable seems severe when he says—"Even that which he hath shall be taken away from him." He was only announcing the Law of Use, which is incontrovertible. Use not and you will lose. Use and you will not lose. An old legend tells us that Jesus and his disciples were going one summer day from Jerusalem to Jericho. Peter was at his side. On the road, as they went, lay a horseshoe, which the Master desired Peter to pick up. But the disciple let it lie because he did not count it worth while. Jesus, however, stooped and picked it up. In the village he exchanged it for a measure of

cherries. When they came to a hill, and the way lay between heated rocks, Peter was tormented with thirst and fell behind. Then the Master dropped a ripe cherry at every few steps, teaching him the lesson that things despised often come to unexpected uses.

The real tragedy of life is not in being limited to one talent, but in the failure to use the one talent. In the Kingdom of God there is "one clear call for me" to serve, whether I have one talent or many to command. "I am but one, but I am one; I cannot do much, but I can do something. What I can do I ought to do, and God helping me, I will do." Happily there is plenty of work to be done in the kingdom that does not exceed our capacity. So diversified also are its needs that every type of ability may find play. Peter seems to have had the gift of speech, while John was a more silent disciple. Said the squirrel to the mountain, "If I cannot bear forests on my back, neither can you crack a nut." Feeble energies will have their opportunity. Not infrequently a small key will unlock a large door. If you discover that you are God's key, be willing to be used, whether for purposes large or small.

"If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say he died for all."

The Quiet of Service

What of success in service? Success is a proper desire, but it is not the highest motive. The chief motive is duty, fidelity. It has been said that "men of principle need not succeed. Success is necessary only to schemers." Real success often involves apparent failure. Do the will of God, and you cannot know failure. Real success lies in being and doing all we can for God. God calls us to be at our best, to live up to our fullest measure for him; not to piece out a spiritual life by patch-work, by misfits, by scantily filled vacancies. Be as useful a disciple as you can be, as you ought to be. This is success, no matter what the outward results and conditions may be. Paul's words make a good motto: "As much as in me is I am ready." God will often see success where the world saw failure. "Hew to the line, no matter where the chips fall."

Ask to be delivered from "laboring" in the service of Christ. Learn the beauty of duty. The quiet of service means to be free from the creaking and grinding of unlubricated machinery. Many of God's children lack the enjoyment of religion because they have not yet discovered the sweetness of service. But when the education of grace has carried us nearer to the heart of the kingdom, we shall awaken to a delightful surprise, that service is not compulsion at all, but inclination. Then we

can even venture the words of the Master, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Then "labor" departs and the joy of service comes. Even the "Mountain of Difficulty," of which Bunyan speaks, will lose its terrors, and we shall count it a joy to "endure hardness" for Jesus Christ.

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