

# CHRISTIAN WOMANHOOD

IN THE

## FORTY DAYS.

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AN EXPOSITION OF ACTS, I., 3.

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RICHMOND, VA.:  
SOUTHERN PULPIT PRINT.  
1888.

## CHRISTIAN WOMANHOOD IN THE FORTY DAYS.

AN EXPOSITION OF ACTS, I, 3.

The "*forty days*" which lay between the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord formed a period of confirmatory wonders that stands by itself in connection with his character and claims as the Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth now comes before us in a semi-glorified condition. The characteristic qualities of this new state appear in his changed relations to time and space, in his corporeal habits, and, likewise, in his modes of intercourse with the apostles and disciples. As to time and space, he showed his entire liberation from their laws, the very laws which he had formerly observed with steady uniformity. In his visits to the small group who clung to him, coming and going so differently from his old method, he demonstrated that he was Sovereign over the material universe to which he had been subjected in his humiliation. "*Made under the law*," he is now the Maker of his own laws. "*Made of a woman*," he rises into his higher Sonship, and the words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" receive their final explanation. Though never more tenderly condescending and loving, yet an awe invests him, a broad space lies between him and his followers; St. John never rests on his bosom, nor does the impulsive and erratic St. Peter indulge his previous familiarity. Most careful is he to make them feel that he is the same Jesus of Nazareth. But how? By reversing the order of the former manifestation; for, whereas the humanity was then in the foreground, and his Deity in the background; now the Deity is brought pre-eminently to view, and the humanity, if not obscured, is constantly kept in a subordinate attitude. Does he work miracles in these forty days? The glory of them is the glory of his humanity made clear and vivid in his initial glorification. Does he teach? Yes; but not by parable and incidents. Speech takes meaning, tone and accent, directly and intensely from the Speaker, and the hearers are men and women, whose intellects have escaped the rigid trammels of the senses, and entered on a semi-spiritual dispensation—men and women "to whom he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days."

Observe, the correspondence between the semi-glorified state of the risen



Christ and the semi-spiritual dispensation, under which the disciples were trained for Pentecost during the forty days. Every fact in Christ's antecedent life, from the lowliness of his birth to the loneliness of his grave, not only exemplified his infinite condescension, but coincidentally a progressive humiliation that exhausted all the phases of this form of human suffering. The poverty, the abandonment of ordinary ease and comfort, the stern withdrawal from all the social auxiliaries of strength and happiness, the descent to the zero of worldly circumstances; all this his own choice, self-assumed and then self-enforced; all persisted in with a cheerful resolution and an unwearied compliance; these were exceptional as to quality and magnitude, and constitute a class of biographical events generic to the nature and position of the Person to whom they belong. Nothing is more common than poverty; nothing so uncommon as Christ's poverty. So of all the aspects of his career. They have their expressional source within him. They are external only because they are internal. And so deeply do they impress his individuality on us, that if any single incident of his existence from Bethlehem to Calvary were detached from it and incorporated, just as given by the evangelists, into any other biography, the utter incongruity would exhibit itself instantly and strikingly. A beautiful block of Parian marble set in the wall of a mud hovel could not impress us as more lacking in harmony of connection. Over all these features of his humiliation, over the humiliation itself in accepting the earthly life of humanity, he pronounced on the cross the words, "*It is finished.*" And, henceforth, they pass out of view as current facts, and are remanded to history. They take on a memorial character. "*In memory of Me,*" each one bears on its front. Nazareth, Capernaum, Tabor, Gethsemane, are thus inscribed; and, amid the scenes of a land everywhere historic, they stand out as columnar reminiscences of his unique ministry. All this is over. "*He is risen.*" A strange cross, alien to that Hebrew soil, brought from afar, the completed symbol of degradation, presents its ghastly image between the past and the present, and near by a vacated grave, where Jerusalem and Rome met, for the last time, to humiliate him in his corpse.

But he has risen now. What he came to do has been done, and his own "*It is finished*" has been answered by his Father's "*It is finished.*" The greatest of his miracles has been reserved to attest, not as former miracles, his divine character and office, but to certify the truth, the perfection, the success, the glory of his atoning work. And hence, as the infinite Father was the first and original party to that work, it being a transaction between the Persons of the Godhead before it could become a transaction between God and man, the earliest and grandest seal set upon the work is by the hand of the Father. "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

Nor is the Holy Ghost without a revelation of his Deity in the august event. "Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." And, consequently, the method of the second manifestation during the forty days is varied. That of the pre-crucifixion period was suited to a ministerial work of sympathy with physical ills, of instruction and guidance, of unfolding the gospel, and it was consummated in the work of expiation and reconciliation by his sacrificial and vicarious death. Unity with the race of Adam, unity of his Jewish blood with Gentile sympathies, unity of himself as the Son of God with humanity, was the eminent fact thus set forth in every utterance and action, and finally illustrated in the agony of Calvary. In the posthumous period of the forty days, his unity with the Father and the Spirit as the eternal Son is the pre-eminent fact, and shapes the order and mode of the second manifestation. The risen body shares the distinctive glory of this new epoch in the history of Christ. There are none of the old forms of feeding the hungry, opening the blind eyes, relieving the tortured demoniacs; none of the old astonishment though a continued wonder; none of the earlier mysteries, but a higher and more complex mystery; and whether he gives his salutation of "Peace," or breathes the Holy Ghost, or opens their hearts to understand the Scriptures, it is all done in a way never done before. He has "*ascended,*" though not "*on high.*" The Ascension is higher than the splendor on the Mount of Transfiguration, so that he has risen not only from the grave, but also risen out of all his habitual connections and associations as to time, and place, and circumstance; another Christ though the same Jesus of Nazareth; another Teacher, Revealer, Inspirer, and yet with a form and look, a tone, a manner and spirit, unmistakably identical with the Friend, Helper, Benefactor of Galilee and Judæa. What know we of the latent sources of identification! How spirit recognizes spirit even through intervening media; what do we comprehend? The transparency in this case was essentially the same. Where wicked hands had blurred it, defaced it, marred it, the signs of their bloody touch were brought back. It was as real and true as before. But the light behind the transparency was made far more brilliant, the illumination was intenser, the surface allowed no misty film or discoloring dust, and the glory of the risen glory was its unobstructed display. Mary Magdalene saw it through her tears, and cried out, "*Rabboni!*" and St. Thomas saw it, and, disdaining his own demanded proofs, exclaimed, "*My Lord and my God!*" and St. John, looking through the dim morning, whispered to St. Peter, "*It is the Lord!*"

Such a state of semi-glorification on the part of the risen Christ has its resemblance or correspondence on the part of his disciples, and, especially, such of them as were on terms of habitual fellowship with him as their Mas-



ter and Lord. They, too, in a certain sense, have risen. Compare St. Thomas the doubter with St. Thomas the believer. One week of distrustful sorrow and gloom held him imprisoned in the senses and their tyrannical intellect. More than a month had he the glad freedom of faith and peace. St. Peter, we may infer, rallied on the first day of the forty from his fall, and, in those words, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," we may read the personal sequel to the fact, that he "went out and wept bitterly." Turn to the first chapter of the Apocalypse and read St. John's account of "One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." The description of the personage is a continuous strain of imagery, most of it in the metaphoric language of the eye, all of it the language of the impassioned heart, rising from the "golden girdle" to his countenance as "the sun shining in his strength." The awe was overpowering, and he "fell at his feet as dead." But do we not detect somewhat of that profound sentiment when he instinctively paused before the open sepulchre in the early hours of its vacancy, and in that scene by the lake shore when St. Peter thrilled to his whisper, "*It is the Lord!*" Throughout the forty days what a reticence marks him, what a silent contemplation, what a deep and holy reverence! And how the scene in Patmos and the scenes of the forty days interblend in the words, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Men carry the past in their eyes more than in any other of the special senses. Thither hasten all the bright and beautiful things that are bordered by the blue of the horizon, or that charm us from the distant stretch of the firmament. And there abides, in the close receptacles of memory, whatsoever stirs the imagination in forms and shapes vividly clear, or picturesquely fascinating. The religious memories of the eye are immortal; and who can wonder that the St. John of Patmos repeats, in fuller sensibility, the St. John of the sepulchre and the Sea of Tiberias!

The period of the forty days is with the disciples *a time of preparation*. Under the immediate guidance of the risen Christ, they are made ready for his final absence from their senses and the sense-intellect. Most powerfully had he impressed this portion of their nature. Other objects had been accomplished. A steady advance had been effected from the material towards the spiritual. But, nevertheless, the main result of our Lord's influence upon them was confined to the lower intellect and its co-related emotions. Not yet had they attained to faith in the Christian sense of that word, nor, indeed, was it possible while Christ was a Christ to the outer man. Not yet had they an opportunity of enduring "as seeing him who is invisible." Not yet could they read the scenes of Galilee and Judæa by light reflected from a centre infinitely higher than themselves. And hence, the

utility of the forty days, in which, by partial presence and partial absence, and by his mysterious ingress and egress when they were assembled together, they were turned to other conceptions of him, and of his relations to them than they had hitherto known. Illusions as to the Messiahship had firm hold on their minds; the weight of centuries was in these illusions; accepted interpretations of the ancient prophecies were in their favor, and all the literalism of the existing Jewish Church strengthened and sustained their ideas of a secular king. A shock had been given this enthusiastic belief by his death. The time had come for further enlightenment, and the forty days supplied the means and opportunity for their higher instruction.

It was, therefore, *a period of transition*. They had to pass from the old to the new. They had to transfer their allegiance from the popular Christ, modified by daily contact with him as Jesus of Nazareth, to the spiritual and glorified Christ as the Head of principality and power, the first-born of every creature, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Such a work could only be done slowly. The laws of the human mind admit no sudden and violent changes where cherished beliefs and permanent habits of thought and feeling are involved. The roots of race and national prejudices are taken from the soil one by one. Christ's method was to demonstrate the fallacy of their favorite idea of a national Messiah. This was his first work. But had it been consummated? Nay; and hence the second portion of his work, viz., to develop, in point of fact, his Spiritual Messiahship. What he was not had been shown; what he was had now to be evinced. I say—*point of fact*—for he had taught them the truth of his Messiahship, both as to its idea and sentiment, nor did anything remain except to give it *actuality* before their eyes and in their experience. Now, this was his Posthumous Ministry. By his method of teaching the Old Testament, by the special mode he adopted of concentrating their attention on the suffering and atoning Christ of the Psalms and the Prophecies; by preaching his own Cross, and exemplifying its meanings in the history of his life and death, he succeeded so far as to *bridge the gulf* between the Jesus of Nazareth and the exalted and crowned Christ on the throne of the universe. The gulf *did* exist for them. The gulf *would* exist for us. But the forty days spanned the abyss for them and for us, so that now there is a perfect continuity in the Birth, Life, Ministry, Death, Resurrection, Posthumous History, Ascension, and Glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. No break! The links *seem* broken at the sepulchre, but the history goes on as the only history of a corpse ever written. No break! The narrative of the dead Christ is given in all its details, the arrested embalming at the grave, the interposed action of priest and procurator, the sealing of the sepulchre, the stationed guard, the descending Sabbath to hallow his repose, the end-



ing of its benediction, the coming of the Angel of the Lord, the snow-white raiment of the celestial visitant and the lightning-like countenance beneath the pale moon, the earthquake, the rolling away of the great stone, the appalled soldiery, and the corpse rising and vanishing unseen by mortal eye. A continuous history, I repeat, and no break! All its parts, the living Christ, and the dead Christ, and the risen Christ, so perfectly interwoven, as that each portion is a portion of every other no less than of the whole, and the whole such a complete and congruous unity, that if you accept the natural you must accept the supernatural.

And, furthermore on this point, the forty days were *preliminary to Pentecost and the dispensation of the Holy Ghost*. These two, Pentecost and the Spirit's permanent offices, were not possible on any known laws of the human mind, except by means of this special introductory season. The sense-man had to be taught and trained by Christ himself to be a believer; the intellectual and moral man had also to be taught and trained by the same Teacher to become a spiritual believer; and that was as far as the twofold form of his *earthly ministry* extended. "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*" was his sublimest act during the forty days. Akin to that was the irresistible power he exerted on Pharisee and Sadducee. Forty days long a silent omnipotence filled the air of Jerusalem. Procurator and Sanhedrim were held in check; and if the guard at the tomb had been "as dead men" when the Angel of the Resurrection descended, the priests and officers of the hierarchy were abashed as Terror walked unchallenged in the streets of the Holy City. Invisible to men, seen only by his elect, the risen Christ was felt as a Presence in the palace, in the Judgment-hall, in the high place of Gabbatha, in the temple, and in them all as a Presence of awful significance. Amid the fearful tranquillity, the disciples received their Lord's visits, heard his blessed teachings, felt his transforming influence, meditated in his absence, communed with one another, interchanged experiences, inspired each other's hearts, grew hopeful and strong as they went on step by step towards Pentecost. An experience of two disciples on the first day of the new era is doubtless typical: "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" "*Eyes*" are "*holden*" now, souls are addressed, hearts "*burn*," Scripture asserts its power; "*receive ye the Holy Ghost*" opens its contents of benediction, and for the first time we have a recorded testimony of positive Christian experience in its emotional characteristics. If this occurred on the opening day of the forty days, what may we reasonably suppose took place on the remaining thirty-nine days? St. John declares that numerous manifestations were made by the risen Lord; what enlightenment, what giving way of hereditary prejudices, what enlargings of soul, what holy inspirations! The

Work was not perfected. Pentecost was to do that. But there was a great advance, and this progress demonstrates itself in the fact, that when the apostles returned to Jerusalem from Olivet, the Mount of Ascension, they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

*Notice the special recognition of womanhood by our Lord during the forty days, and the typical instances of Christian womanhood which the narratives of this period exhibit.* It was no new thing for the Lord Jesus to show his interest in womanhood, but at this time he expressed it in a very earnest and touching manner. We know how he opened his career by evincing his divine solicitude in its behalf; how in Samaria he revealed himself in an exceptional manner to the woman at Jacob's well; and how at Cana in Galilee, at the instance of his mother, he wrought a miracle and "manifested forth his glory" in connection with the most important event in a woman's life. We know, too, of his regard for the sisters of Bethany, what offices they performed for him, one sister representing in domestic industry the hospitality of home, and the other the hospitality of intellect and sentiment in his service, and we are left in no doubt as to his cordial appreciation of their very unlike characters. We know, further, that certain women are honorably mentioned as ministering "unto him of their substance"—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, and "many others." We know, also, that the most pathetic scene in the closing days of his life derives its human interest from Mary of Bethany, and that he immortalized the worth of a true and noble sentiment, as against the rivalry of a narrow and obtuse utility, by incorporating the act of Mary into the very substance of his own Gospel, a solitary case which had no precedent, and can have no precise imitation. And yet, it is quite obvious, that womanhood comes before us in the forty days, in a very distinct and striking attitude as to its relations to him and his relations to it, nor can we help seeing that a marked change has been brought about in their respective positions.

Among those who "companied" with him in the days of his humiliation, who of the men appear at his burial? Who, of the immediate groups of those about Christ, bring linen and spices to enwrap and embalm his corpse? Not an apostle is seen. "All the disciples forsook him and fled." The dying Christ was forsaken, St. John excepted. The dead Christ was forsaken. And yet the women who had "companied" with him in some of his missionary tours, and devoted a portion of their "substance" to his support and comfort, continue their ministrations when those of the apostles have been suspended. "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments." The shock of



Christ's death has paralyzed the apostles, but it has nerved the courage and inflamed the love of these true-hearted women. Faithful to their instincts, faithful to their memories, faithful to their habits of tender ministration, they continue their offices to the dead Christ just as they had been consecrated to the living Christ; and they do it calmly, deliberately, bravely, in the face of danger and from their own impulse. Whose Christ is that dead Christ? Only theirs. Ambition has abandoned him, worldliness has left him to his dishonor, selfishness has forgotten him, good men have turned away pale and dispirited from his corpse, and but two friends, Joseph and Nicodemus, who had not been among his public adherents, are resolute enough to provide for his interment. With the exception of these two members of the Sanhedrim, that humble funeral procession which followed the bier from Calvary to the tomb, was made up of women.

No doubt God's hand was in all this. Providence can be interpreted only by providences, and accordingly we may believe that these women had been and were now under training for the revelations of the forty days. The discipline of woman is the discipline of intellect, volition, and activity, by means of her affections. She begins where man generally ends—with the heart: and as the dispensation of the forty days was to be, by eminence, the culture-season of the heart, we can see why these women should come into prominence. No Christian thinker can suppose that chance had anything to do with their visit to the sepulchre on the morning of Christ's resurrection, nor with Christ's first appearances to them, nor with the commission to them to announce his return to life. Reasons for these things existed natively as capacities and intuitions in their souls, and providence had schooled them for the specific tasks assigned them in the economy of this marvelous period. No stumbling on such acts was possible. If we examine this matter closely, we shall find that there was ground in the nature of things for the facts that occurred in connection with the experience and testimony of these women; and, moreover, we shall see not only the bearing of their conduct on the historical evidences of the resurrection, but in conjunction therewith, a philosophy of religion which is too commonly overlooked.

Let it be kept in mind, then, that these women were the first testifiers to the resurrection of Christ. What was Christ's method in the manifestation made to them? It was a specific method. In the case of Mary Magdalene, he said "*Mary!*" and the word was enough. She knew him instantly, and exclaimed, "*Rabboni!*" In the instance of the other Galilean women to whom he made the second appearance, he announced himself with the "*All Hail!*" Mary was not allowed to touch him; the Galilean women were permitted to "hold him by the feet and worship him." In the former, no

verification by the sense of touch was suffered. "*Touch me not,*" said Jesus to Mary. In the latter, the verification was granted. But was Mary in the same state, physiological and psychological, as the other women? Certainly not; Mary was in tears. She was sorrowing over the lost body. "Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." The idea of the lost body having pre-occupied her mind, it is possible that our Lord meant to call off her attention from the risen body to the risen self. Whether so or not, the evidence of his appearance not only relieved her grief, but assured her perfectly of his return to life, and filled her heart with gladness. No conflict existed in her emotions; she was not frightened, not even disturbed. The intense woman yielded herself to the ecstasy of the moment, nor was there the slightest doubt, or distrust, or apprehension in her state of mind. Not so with the other women; they were alarmed. After hearing the angel's announcement of the resurrection, they left the tomb "*quickly,*" and "with fear and great joy." They "*did run* to bring his disciples word." Evidently, now, the rapidity of their movement and the excitement of "*fear*" were very unfavorable to clearness, accuracy, and force of testimony. If the nerves are excited, the arterial action quickened, the breathing hurried, two effects are certain to ensue, viz., facts make an imperfect and distorted impression, and the recalling power of memory is impaired. These are physiological facts which, I presume, no one will dispute. If, then, the Galilean women had reached the disciples in this half-hysterical condition, would not their testimony have been abated as to its value? And would not sensible men have been justified in suspecting some illusion? And would not "*idle tales*" have been charged on the witnesses with a very decided logic in its favor? Jesus said to these women, "*Be not afraid.*" Having calmed their nervous agitation and thereby tranquillized their emotions, he proceeds to say, "Go tell my brethren." Tell them what? "Tell my brethren that they *go into Galilee*, and there shall they see me." What was Mary Magdalene instructed to say? "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I *ascend* to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Observe the difference in the commissions given. The *ascension-glory* of the resurrection of Christ is committed exclusively to Mary, and in congruity therewith, "*Touch me not,* for I am not yet ascended to my Father." This *ascension-idea* in the resurrection was one thing; the *stay on earth* was another and very different thing. The second manifestation and its accompanying commission had reference to the prolonged sojourn of our Lord on earth, and hence the Galilean women were charged to mention Galilee as the province where the risen Christ would manifest himself to the disciples. Two distinct ideas, therefore, were communicated to the women; one, touching the consummation of the glory of the risen Christ,



was entrusted to Mary Magdalene. This idea discriminates fully between Christ's exclusive Sonship and the sonship of believers; "*My Father, my God,*" and "*your Father, your God.*" Mary consequently was to bear witness to the prospective Christ in the splendor of his exaltation. *Touch him?* Him, King of kings, Lord of lords? Him, with the trophies of captivity led captive? Him, with the many crowns on his head? Nay; the vision of the ascended and glorified Christ which was suggested at the instant to this nobly-endowed woman would have vanished had she clasped him to her heart.

On the other hand, sensuousness has its place, and a very important place in the economy of Christianity. By sensuousness, I mean the legitimate use of the senses in the service of the higher nature, tributary to the intellectual and spiritual man. I use the term as Milton did when he spoke of true poetry as "*simple, sensuous, and passionate.*" Now, the risen Christ had to address this sensuous nature in the disciples in order to develop their relations to supersensuous objects. After his resurrection, he was in a position to do this work most effectively; his own body was a "*spiritual body,*" and could only become visible and tangible by his divine act; and, hence while giving them the proofs of his resurrection, he was educating them in the doctrine of the "*spiritual body*" and the uses of the present body as relative thereunto. One form of this education we have seen in Mary Magdalene. Another form appears in the Galilean women, and has reference to impressions partly sensuous and partly spiritual, the sensuous being entirely subordinate to the spiritual. These women had no ~~belief~~ as to the fact of Christ's resurrection; they had "*great joy,*" they ran "*to bring his disciples word,*" and when Jesus saluted them, "*they held his feet and worshiped him.*" But they had to do a very different work from Mary's, which work was to prepare the disciples to receive the Christ of the forty days. They were allowed to verify their belief by touch. If, then, the disciples resisted Mary's testimony on the ground that she had only the evidence of eye and ear, the others could offer the proof of eye, ear, and touch. The sensuous in the latter instance was perfect, and accordingly provision was made at the outset for the two forms of evidential influence, viz., Mary's, in which the spiritual predominated with a limited and restrained sensuousness, and that of the group of women, in which the verification of touch was permitted.

How did the risen Lord proceed that Sunday night, when he suddenly appeared in the midst of the disciples and said, "*Peace be unto you!*" "*They were terrified and affrighted,*" according to St. Luke's account, which is peculiarly valuable because of its physiological insight. No one but a physician could have written such a narrative as he has given. How did

...<sup>tep</sup>... must meet the alarm of these persons who "*supposed that they had seen a spirit?*" Appeals to the judgment of eye and ear in this case would not attain the desired end. Only touch would be a proper challenge to nerves, brains, and souls, in that condition. Therefore said he to them: "*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.*" Then he showed them his hands and feet. To complete the sensuous evidence to the understanding, he asked for food, and "*he took it, and did eat before them.*" This was not the ascension-idea of the forty days, that Mary's exalted faith was instructed to communicate as the faith of profound instinct. No; it was on a much lower plane of experience. St. Mark gives us the key to it. "*Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*" They disbelieved Mary Magdalene. They disbelieved the Galilean group. "*Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.*" For three years these men had been in training as witnesses. On the threshold of their second and higher education, they reject both the great forms of evidence—the logic of the understanding and the logic of instinct, and these apostles reject them, moreover, under circumstances which Christ had instituted by selecting women to give the initial testimony to the fact of his resurrection. The first eye-witnesses of this fact were heart-witnesses, full of transporting joy, and ready to receive him with welcoming adoration. The first proclaimers of this fact were heart-proclaimers, whose only power of speech was the power of sentiment and profound feeling. They had no humiliating memories; the apostles had. They had clung to him to the last on earth, and after the last; the dead Christ was their Christ, and the risen Christ was their Christ; but not so with the apostles. And the treatment these apostles gave them was to refuse credence and dismiss their earnest and tender assurances "*as idle tales.*" What an instance of silent and unrecognized self-vengeance in the souls of these apostles! And how sternly the process of recompense went on, the measure they had meted out, meted back to them again! And they administering it unconsciously to themselves! On a memorable occasion, they had found fault with Mary of Bethany for the tribute of love rendered to the Christ of a true woman's instincts. Judas gave a voice to their murmurings then, but there was no Judas now; and their sad infirmity of faith could only speak of the testimony of these women "*as idle tales.*" *Sad infirmity;* no more; no passion, no contempt, no pride, no conceit; only weak faith and its necessary sequence of weak hope and weak charity. And when the risen Lord comes to them, the first lesson of the forty days is his upbraiding for their "*unbelief and hardness of*



heart" From sunrise to sunset on that most glorious of days, the day <sup>between</sup> the resurrection, all of them, or nearly all, were virtually St. Thomas, <sup>my</sup> looking upon the women as deluded, while they themselves were the victims of self-deceit.

But was it not all overruled of God? He, the risen Lord, who "knew what was in man," foresaw just what occurred, and yet he commissioned these womanly witnesses to announce to the disciples his return from the grave. Every day of human life is a new probation, a new approach of Satan, a new outcoming of the dormancy of our inexhaustible nature, a new struggle between the forces of good and evil in our souls. In this appointed trial of their faith they failed. The openness of the receiving heart was wanting. "Certain women also of our company made us astonished," was all that the two could say to the Stranger who walked with them to Emmaus. No wonder their outer "eyes were holden" when their inner vision was so shrouded by the shadows of his sepulchre; and no wonder that the apostles were betrayed by their folly and feeble-mindedness into a denial of the testimony given them of the Lord's resurrection. There are times when the present is a mere name, a hollow sound that means nothing, and the only present is the past, and the past is utter mournfulness. We are not ourselves then, but the dead selves of former days, walking and acting in the physical existence of the current hours. Such was emphatically the state of the apostles on that Sunday; Christ dead to them because they were dead to themselves, and dead to the beautiful and noble sympathies that appealed to them from the hearts of the women. A few hours passed and they wakened into a real life. "Peace be unto you" had been sent by him to them through his elect messengers, and it had been refused. Christ had been dishonored in his servants, and the first gloom cast over that resplendent day is the darkness escaping from apostolic souls. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Yet in his infinite condescension, the risen Jesus, barred in an unhappy moment from the house of his friends, glides into their midst through the unopened door and says, "*Peace be unto you!*" It is all changed now; and only one is left to remind them for a week what they had been for a day, while the syllables are unconsciously shaping the words in his troubled soul, "*My Lord and my God!*" How keenly must they have felt the ingratitude and unkindness of their spirit and conduct that Sunday! What an insight into the evil yet in their souls! What an auxiliary to repentance and faith in those painful recollections! Aye, more, what a lesson to them as apostles, who were to preach "*Jesus and the resurrection,*" a lesson in patience and forbearance and considerate pity towards men, who would cavil everywhere and resist the gospel of the resurrection! Yes; it was all overruled by Providence for their good as men, and as apos-

teach-  
ers, and many an hour when sceptics and scoffers were assailing the great truth of the resurrection, and impeaching their testimony to the fact that Christ had risen on the third day from the dead, must they have recalled how "slow of heart" they had been to believe.

Humble witnesses were these women. According to the usages of their people, they were in a novel position, without any prestige, without accredited claims on public attention, and their only defense was that the risen Christ had sent them. "*Tell my brethren,*" said Jesus; tell them for me. What they thought and felt was not the authoritative point of their embassy; nor was it their voice, but his voice they were to hear. Had it been otherwise, had he chosen St. Peter or St. John to bear the glad tidings, it is altogether likely that the announcement would have been promptly heeded. But the whole procedure was out of course, and doubtless to some of them quite absurd. This exceptional feature in the matter, however, was the test-element, and by it, and it alone, was the virtue of honest and hearty acceptance to be tried. It was tried, and found wanting. And how frequently since that memorable day has this spirit been reproduced? When it pleases God to call new agents into his service, few are found to give them instant and cordial recognition. The early field-preachers of Methodism were thought disorderly. John Wesley was sorely offended by the lay-preaching of Thomas Manfield, and hurried to London, eager to arrest the innovation. "John," said his wise mother, "he is as surely called of God to preach as you are; and the son examined the case, and the great movement of redeeming the eighteenth century was saved from an interruption, and, perchance, a defeat. And what a long battle in some of the churches in Old England and New England before Dr. Watts's hymns could be allowed to articulate God's praise in the public congregations! The test continues from age to age, the same as to its principle that occurred eighteen hundred years ago; and good men are yet startled to find the spiritual providence of Christ putting on a new form. The old garb is thrown aside. The disguise is folded closely about the figure. A gardener to Mary, a wayfaring stranger to the two on their route to Emmaus, a chance inquirer on the lake shore; so it was then, and so it is even now. In our own day, what speculations of thought, what wonder and mystery as to Moody and Sankey, and the Salvation Army! Go back to that distant morning, when the Mighty Victor, who had stood before Mary a moment in concealed glory, threw off the veil, and appeared as the Victor radiant in the first splendor of his coronation-day. She hastens to the best people of that time, to her own people, to Christ's select and honored friends; she tells the story; she tells it in "*Rabboni's*" name; and she is discredited. And here, A. D. 1883, are thousands of Christian believers, honest and right-minded, who treat Providence in Christ pre-



cisely as he was treated then. That lesson was not local and circumstantial. It was not Jewish exclusively. It was not peculiar to the immediate issues of the resurrection. But it is a lesson for us, for all Christian people, for every age and country, lest we fail to see God in the manifoldness of his working, and especially in his humbler witnesses. "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."

"Many voices!" Ah, it was not understood then; the voice of womanhood was as nothing; it had no *signification*. Has this voice its rightful signification yet? Of late years it has been heard to an increasing extent; and since the voice of this womanhood issued from the heart of Hannah More at Barleywood, we have listened to the voices of Mary Jane Graham, Mrs. Fry, Charlotte Elizabeth, Florence Nightingale, Agnes Jones, and others. Thanks to Providence for such witnessing! Yet, admitting this, and rejoicing in it, womanhood cannot be regarded as beyond an incipient stage of development in the Christian Church. Her voice as a witness for Christ has but small compass, and many there be who attach no divine "signification" to it. Thanks to Providence again! The grand impulses of the age, so far as the Church of Christ is concerned, are assuming in England and America far more of a womanly form than at any former time, and it is a most hopeful sign both for civilization and Christianity. Just now, therefore, it behooves us to study the wisdom of Christ in choosing women to be the testifiers to the grandest fact of the gospel in advance of apostles and all other witnesses. Surely, there is a great truth here for us to learn. Surely, too, it is a much-needed truth in our century. Surely, when men are exploring sections of the globe hitherto unknown, bringing to light vast portions of the earth's surface long hidden, finding immense treasures embosomed in the depths of the land, and ready for the enlarging demands of civilization, continents of metals and minerals beneath continents of cities and farms and vineyards, islands encased in islands, and awaiting only the entering light of the sun to reveal their wonders to trade and commerce; surely, in such an age, we ought to understand how the hand of God is pointing us to the unused resources of Christian womanhood, and how earnestly the Holy Spirit is pleading with our sloth and insensibility, and especially with our prejudices to let the voice of womanhood have its signification. \* \* \* I say prejudices, for these are the strongholds of Satan in us. Among our Anglo-Saxon women it can never be a noisy and clamorous voice. It will not be "harsh or grating," but the "still sad music of humanity," and with "ample power to chasten and subdue." It will not be heard in the streets, nor often in the pulpit, but it will be heard in the school-room, among the cottages of the poor, in the dens of

the outcasts, in the cells of prisons, in asylums, in mission-stations, and wherever else the consciences of men are to be reached through their hearts.

God be merciful unto us, and help our weakness! Near me lies a volume I have read with great care, and particularly the chapter, "On the Apparitions at Jerusalem," as connected with the "Formation of Beliefs Relative to the Resurrection of Jesus." It is by M. Renan, and is entitled "The Apostles." It is a book of research, of fine constructive art, and of fascinating style. The eye of its author is keen enough where his favorite theory of imaginative illusion is involved, but elsewhere under a strange film. It is the eye of the eagle for its prey, not the eye of the eagle for the sun. In these words we have the basic conception of his theory of Christ's resurrection, viz.: "The glory of the resurrection belongs then to Mary of Magdala. After Jesus, it is Mary who has done most for the foundation of Christianity. The shadow created by the delicate sensibility of Magdalene wanders still on the earth. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than any one how to assert her dream, and impose on every one the vision of her passionate soul. Her great womanly affirmation, 'He has risen,' has been the basis of the faith of humanity. Away, impotent reason!"

M. Renan speaks of "a tender regret" which "occupied her soul," "surprise and grief," because of the absent corpse; "she wept copiously; one sole thought pre-occupied her mind; where had they put the body?" The apparition appears to her excited fancy. "She thinks that she hears herself called by her name, Mary. \* \* \* It was the accent of Jesus. 'Oh, my Master,' she cries! \* \* \* The light vision gives way and says to her, 'Touch me not.' Little by little the shadow disappears." Such is the theory.

It is thoroughly unphilosophical. No basis exists in the ordinary laws of the human mind for a hypothesis of this sort. The sense of time in our nature is against it. To reproduce an image as an apparition, the impressions made by the real object must lapse away; and, out of these dissolved elements, the mimic artist of the brain finds the materials with which to construct the semblance of the faded reality. Three days were not a sufficient time for this to occur. The sensibility to grief is opposed to it. Grief is a depressing emotion, and, in its first stage, unfavorable to imaginative activity. Grief exhausts the nervous system and the brain during our waking hours, and hence operates as a constant deterrent on the imaging faculty. Because of this law we seldom dream at night of the departed, and very rarely of those recently dead. Sir William Hamilton says: "It is curious that the persons the dearest to us are precisely those about whom we dream most rarely." If Mary of Magdala was the intense woman that



M. Renan supposes, that very intenseness would bar any tendency, at that time, to re-instate Christ's image in a hallucination, since the vivid presence yet remaining in her brain would necessarily forestall an illusory creation. If she was "queen and patroness of idealists," that very constitution of intellect and emotional energy would have tended to prevent her idealizing of Christ at so early a period after his crucifixion. Aside from these facts, she had no expectation of his resurrection. Expectant attention, which is a great help to imaginative reproduction, was in her case entirely wanting. The thought of the corpse taken from the tomb, M. Renan properly argues, pre-occupied her mind as "one sole thought." If the *one sole thought* pre-occupied her mind, no reason exists for the supposition that this would facilitate an apparitional appearance. All the reasons are on the other side. Just in the degree she dwelt on the lost corpse would she be incapacitated for a hallucination. Full of love, of tenderness, of grief; the grief doubled by a lost Christ and his lost corpse; it seems to me that her imagination would be utterly paralyzed. But was that all? Nay; love, tenderness, and grief had an instant work to do. It was to recover the missing body. How the work pressed on her heart! What beseeching pathos in her appeal, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Very real those words; no imagination here; effort and energy, the safeguards against apparitions. To recover the corpse demanded her common sense and earnest exertion, and these were not propitious to visionary deceits. I conclude, therefore, that this theory as revived and rehabilitated by the genius of M. Renan has nothing in its favor, but everything to condemn its acceptance. Mental physiology is against it. Psychology is against it. Our instincts, whether intellectual or spiritual, are against it. Time, place, circumstances, as connected with the event, are against it. To say nothing of the other witnesses to the risen Christ; of the variety and independence and fullness of the testimony; of the manifestations of Christ on different occasions and in different localities; of these appearances, as always unexpected in their aspects and associations, only two of them bearing any resemblance in their incidental features; to say nothing of the conviction of the Sandedrim that he was risen, and that, had it been possible, they would gladly have found refuge from guilty apprehensions in the idea of an apparition; to say nothing of all these facts, the theory of M. Renan has its echo in his own ejaculations, "*Away, impotent reason!*"

Aye, verily, "*Away!*" Give us the true Mary Magdalene! Give us the Mary portrayed by inspired "reason" with such vivid naturalness—the chastened woman—the acute sufferer in those days when she learned the realities of her own heart and of life under the sternest of all teachings, the

teachings of anguish. Give us the grateful and consecrated woman whom the Lord Jesus relieved from the torturings of Satan, and then blest her with a new soul and a new world. Give us this disciple and follower and friend of Christ, too intelligent to be self-deceived in a matter so momentous, and too holy to be instrumental in deceiving others. Ideals are beautiful things. Grand realities are far better. Mary is woman enough without being "queen and patroness of idealists." It is not her imagination that has given her such a commanding position in Christian history. First and last, the strong realism of her nature stands out conspicuously, and on this firm pedestal her character is based. Eighteen centuries lie between her day and ours, but her noble devotion, her perfect truthfulness to herself, her courageous love, her serene and sublime faith, are still an admiration and a wonder in the world.—*The London Homiletic Quarterly Magazine.*