Seven Deadly Sins!

Morgan Dix, 1888

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To all those who dread the power of sin and, by the grace of God, desire to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world — this little volume is affectionately written.

1. General Introduction

"Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike. My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the utterance from my heart will give understanding." Psalm 49:1-3

Many years have passed away since I preached on the subject of *the Seven Deadly Sins*. Requests have been repeatedly made that, at some convenient time, the subject would be resumed; and although it does not seem expedient to say over again, word by word, what was then said, nor to reproduce those instructions in their original form — yet there is no reason why we should not come back to the general theme, and keep it before us.

For of the urgent questions of the time, none are of such universal urgency as those concerning the *sins of men.* The shadow of sin lies as heavy on the earth as in former years; nor is there any life which is not, to some extent, overcast by that horrible cloud of sin. *The misery which extorts complaints in every part of the land and from every grade of society — is the outcome of sin in some of its protean shapes.* Trouble which, fourteen years ago, could merely be traced on the horizon, like a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, and now fills the heavens with storm-signals and the gathering rack of the tempest — is distinctly the result of the sin of man against his fellow-man. Offences against *morals* which were then denounced, continue — and perhaps with less apology on the part of the offenders — and those ill-doers whom we then tried to restrain, have asserted their independence of our attempt at control, and exalt themselves, and smite us on the face!

The time will never come when this dreadful subject will be out of order, until God arises to judgment, and sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the ungodly shall come to an end. There is abundant reason why *the Seven Deadly Sins* should be brought before the congregation from time to time.

To begin with: The question meets us, *What is sin?* And that question must be put and answered, because, strange as it may sound, there are people in the world who declare that there is no such thing as sin. Evil, according to them, is not evil, but imperfect or incomplete good; and sin is "the shadow of moral excellence and goodness cast upon the ground." It is hard to conceive of the intellectual state of people who hold such opinions, or to imagine in what a confused maze they must be walking; still, there are men who teach that strange doctrine, who *think that conscience is merely a bundle of prejudices*, and seem unable to pronounce the word "sin," without an intonation expressive of contempt.

No doubt the common-sense of mankind is the sufficient defense against these wild speculations. When we are told of the house-breaker and midnight assassin, whom we see dashing out the brains of his victim and rifling his drawers — that the acts should not be regarded as *sinful*, but as incompletely good and worthy. Or when, as some profligate man accomplishes the ruin of a victim whom by force he has overpowered — we are informed that he has done no evil, but merely cast "the shadow of moral excellence" upon that blighted life — we know where to place, well up in the scale of fanatics, and possibly at the very top, the people who can so interpret *crimes* at which the moral sense revolts, and which the law justly pursues with avenging hand.

But there are many whom absurdities like this confuse and startle; wherefore it is well for us all to know *what sin is*, and what we mean when we use the word. We have a definition in the Apostle's language: "Sin is the transgression of the law." And the law here spoken of is that eternal law, whose seat is the bosom of God and whose voice is the harmony of the world.

God is, from eternity, the same — yesterday, and today, and forever. And God's will is like Himself, unchanging from age to age, and to ages of ages. And what we call the moral law is the expression of that eternal will of God, made known to us men as our rule and guide of action. Truth, purity, love; these are divine attributes, never-failing, never-varying. And the law — which is God's will and Himself expressed — requires in us love, purity, truth; no lying, no falsehood, no sensual passion, no impure thought, no anger, no envy or hatred. Whatever things are true, honest, and just, whatever things are pure, lovely, and of good report — these and the like are enjoined in the law.

Man was made in the image of God and in His likeness — the created nature was intended to be a reflection of the Divine nature. The soul of man ought to be in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God. The will of the Lord ought to be the law and rule of our existence. Now, sin is the transgression of that law. It is the revolt of man from the line marked out in his creation. It is the rebellion of man against the Sovereign ruler above him. It is the refusal to do God's will. It is the result of a change in us, whereby we abandon the true, the pure, the lovely — and follow after the unlovely, the impure, and the false. Sin is the deliberate choice of whatever things are false, dishonest, and unjust, of whatever things are unclean, unholy, and of evil report — it is the deviation from the path whereby we should have walked with God. That is sin.

And the *conscience*, while alive and sensitive . . . will inform men of each instance in that transgression, upbraid them with their folly, and warn of just retribution.

The trouble with those people who deny the possibility of sinning is this: That they have lost the true idea of God; knowing not God, they know not His will. Their God is that "philosophic God" of whom one of our anarchists spoke last year — a God who never troubles Himself about us men, and has no will or wish concerning us one way or the other. The only law they know is the law of nature; and they say that so long as a man follows the natural law, or can show that in whatever he does, he obeys his natural instincts — he must be in the right. No wonder that the knowledge of *sin* is lost to men who have lost the knowledge of the *Eternal God* and of that *perfect law* which is the expression of His will. It is the just penalty on naturalistic speculation, that its votaries can no longer see the calm, clear heavens above them — but take their place, by preference, among the beasts that perish! Nor can men come to a more appalling state, than when they become a law unto themselves.

Perhaps I have dwelt too long upon this part of my subject; perhaps I have given to this stupendous folly more time than it deserved — for it is, it can be, none other than a fool that has said in his heart: "There is no such thing as sin!" Nero sat and played the fiddle while Rome was burning; and when the black pestilence was raging in Florence, a little knot of people were shut up in a villa outside the walls, passing their time in carousing and feasting, as if to forget the horrors around them. It will not do.

Sin is an awful fact — the most conspicuous, the most dreadful thing with which we have to deal! *Sin is a plague in every heart — and a cancer in society!* Herein is no change from one generation to another. The history of the human race in its present condition, began with an act of *disobedience*, with an infidelity, with the listening to a falsehood told to draw men off from God. That history was continued in a *murder*. It has gone on from violence to violence, with wars and fightings, in sorrow and tears. It is proceeding toward one last and overwhelming judgment on an apostate world!

The consciousness of sin, and the dread of having to atone for it, are the dominating ideas in the religions of the world. The rite of sacrifice, common to all, tells the story of the hopes and fears of the universal heart. The glorious *Cross of Christ*, upraised as an ensign to the nations, and irresistibly attracting men to it — denotes the presence of sin, its horrible ravages, and the incredible mode of its expiation.

This subject of sin is always before us in some shape or other. It is one in which every human being has a direct personal interest. It disturbs the order of the nations, and the peace of every individual. It is the cause of every grief, of every wrong, of every pain — lying back of these as their fountain and source.

There is question how long this fabric of the earth has stood; how old is the race which now occupies it; whether there were what they call pre-Adamic or pre-historic men. However these questions may be answered, they do not affect this subject. We can go back about six thousand years, and be sure that, so far at least, beings like ourselves have inhabited this planet. All that time this human race has been substantially what it is — always in trouble, always at war, always lifting hand and voice toward the God of Heaven in deprecation of His supernatural powers, always seeking a medicine for bodily and mental distress. The victim, or the willing slave, of some mortal malady, of some horrible demon, in consequence of which its history has been written, not in gold and mirthful, bright colors — but in darker hues, and, as it were, with pigments moistened with blood.

Look back to those six thousand years, see that *dark procession* of the forms of men, traveling on their hard road, coming up out of dimness, passing out into clear view, descending to their *own place*, and always and everywhere overhung by clouds; clouds condensed from the vapors of that *heart* which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

Sin is not outside the man — it is within him. There is no *eternal principle of evil*; nor is evil a real thing detachable from personal agency. But sin is just what the apostle says it is: The transgression of the law, by angel and archangel first, by man afterward. And the deep cloud which overhangs that long procession is cast, not by moral excellence and goodness — but by the transgressions of men rendered back a hundred-fold, a thousand-fold, into their guilty souls.

This, then, must be fully understood at the outset, that sin, whatever shape it takes, begins within the man himself. Every sin is at bottom selfishness — every sin can be traced straight back to self. Sin is, at the last analysis, self-will, self-reliance, self-love. Nothing but self-will, or self-esteem, or self-reliance could have led any created being to rebel against God, or to try to do without God. And, therefore, in that dreadful gallery through which we shall walk hand in hand, where horrible sights are encountered on either side, and revolting pictures displayed for inspection — the most painful reflection of all will be, that these are merely *views of the interior of our own nature*, and that nothing of this would ever have been seen among us, had not men begun by that *fatal transgression* of the law.

Some difficulty may be found in realizing, by general definition, what sin is — it is hard to comprehend it in the *abstract*. And while we linger over general definitions and abstract statements — the atheistic school gains opportunity to blind the eyes of others by their irrational denials and wild conceits. But come to sin in the concrete shape — and the time for trifling and playing with fire is at an end. Sin takes certain precise outlines; it comes into formal categories, not the product of scholastic subtlety — but sketched from the life. Looking about him, and considering attentively the works of men, the well-taught Christian has no difficulty in distinguishing the outlines of certain figures, which appear as leaders of men, as guides to their steps, as shepherding them after a woeful sort — like a flock fitted for destruction.

The Church tells us what sin is in the abstract. But she does not stop with that. She tells us, moreover, of *Seven Deadly Sins*. There is a vast variety in sins, but whatever their character or their magnitude, down to the least, they are all reducible, finally, to some one of seven forms of sin. We are now no longer dealing with generalities, but face to face with our foes. These Seven Deadly Sins are *sin in concrete shape* — these seven specters of the conscience — if conscience still acts. They are capable of being described, analyzed, and placed under the lens for inspection. We speak of these as *Deadly* Sins — they are also called *Capital* Sins, and *Mortal* Sins.

Capital Sins, because they affect the head and the life.

Mortal Sins, because their doom is death.

Deadly Sins, because their effect is to destroy both body and soul in Hell. And these, to name them at length, are as follows:

First of all, Pride;
then, Anger;
next, Covetousness;
then Lust, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth.

No wrong thing have you ever done, which could not be assigned to some one of those seven heads; not one of them but manifests your love of yourself, and your departure from the holy law of God.

Are you ready to enter this Chamber of Horrors? No collection in the museums, here or abroad, better deserved the name. We have before us nothing vague — no shadows, no illusions. We are among *facts*, as real, as striking, as any scientist could desire. *Pride, anger, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, sloth* — these words denote precisely what we encounter in . . .
the haughty scorners and free thinkers,
the hot-tempered and intractable,
the lovers of money,
the lascivious men and impure women,
the envious of others' prosperity,
the glutton and the sluggard.

There is no danger of mistaking any one of these sins, when seen in the man or woman of whom it has taken possession.

Pride has a decided look, and acts in an intelligible way.

Anger is no shadow of the fancy, but a condition which suggests the wisdom of protecting one's self from the storm, as best one may.

Impurity can be detected, in the eye and the features, by a nameless something which tells the loathsome secret, through any attempt at disguise.

As for these sins, it needs no moral theologian to tell us what they are and where is their abode. And they are as old as the human race, and in all ages exactly the same. They have not grown a day older these six thousand years, nor is their natural strength abated. They retain a shocking vigor and freshness as the human race multiplies.

Examples, to illustrate the subject, may be drawn as well from the old time before Christ, as from the recent times; and from the days before the flood — as suitably as from the year in which we now are living. There is a *family likeness* which no one could mistake.

The murderer of today reproduces the countenance of Cain, as if he were Cain's own child.

In the *adulterers* of today we see the same as those whom Jeremiah described as "They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife!" Jeremiah 5:8

Now also have we among us, as in the days of Ahaz, men . . .
who join house to house, and lay field to field, until there is no room left for the poor to stand upon,
who oppress the hireling in his wages,
who follow strong drink until wine inflames them,
who set man against man, and class against class, in envious hate, separating those who should have lived in unity and brotherly love.

What has *philosophy* done to help a race thus beset by these seven deadly foes? *Long*, and *weary*, and *vain* have been its efforts to accomplish what nothing but the *Cross* and the *Grace* of our Lord can effect. The old philosophers tried to deal with these dreadful adversaries, employing arts dictated by an ever-waning hope — they failed, and miserably. In most cases they were taken prisoners themselves and added to the number of the victims. Then have the new philosophers followed, but with no better success; until they also have surrendered, and exhibit their confusion either by deciding to let the subject drop, or else by taking the ground, as we have already seen, that sin is not sin, and that Pride, and Anger, and Lust, and all the rest, are *really virtues in a crude condition*, which do no harm and need no repression.

Thus of old the philosophers talked on the subject and failed; and thus in our day their successors either cease to talk, or talk like fools, and fail as before; while the Seven Dire Shapes sit on their seats, and rule the people. Around them the arts may flourish; literature may be cultivated, and science may pursue her studies — yet progress of that kind works no change in those arbiters of our destiny. They inject their poison into the literature of the age, they fling into its arts their obscene corruption, they make the wise man blind, so that he can no longer see the God whom Nature reveals to the thoughtful soul.

Men grow in the knowledge of sin, much faster than in any other knowledge — to that knowledge, all other gives way. Were there no Divine Power at work to help us, these deadly sins would send the world back into barbarism. Were there no supernatural charm to exorcise these seven throned and crowned oppressors — we should see neither limit to their audacity nor bounds to their success. By brain-work and hand-work men might construct a temple fairer than that of Ephesus, as the monument of scientific, literary, and industrial advance; but before the capstone had been laid, these Furies, entering with their firebrands, would lay the structure in ashes.

Let us make no mistake on this subject. Whether the question is, how to meet and repress this overwhelming power of sin in the *social* order — or how to deal with it as a plague in each man's own heart, be sure that neither in art, nor in literary culture, nor in scientific attainment, is there the help that we need. *Art* may become the ministrant to lust, *literature* the medium of moral corruption, *science* the deceiver of the people.

There is no remedy against sin but in repentance, confession, and amendment of life; even these are in themselves of no avail, nay, rather are they impossible, until we come, in our penitence and contrition, unto Him who alone was without sin, who made the one and only atoning sacrifice and atonement for it, who alone is able to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. O! how utterly, how absolutely, in that sacred and saving presence — do human wisdom, and human power, and human effort — sink out of sight! Chastened, hopeful, and calm, men who have failed everywhere else go forth from God, strong in the word addressed to them: "Son, daughter, your sin is forgiven — your faith has saved you — go in peace, and sin no more."

My brethren, the voice of the Scriptures can neither flatter nor deceive. You know that this is an age of morbid sentiment, philanthropic gush, and dislike of hard and heavy things. To this false, weak spirit, our religion will make no concession. Sin is sin, whatever may be said to the contrary, and "the soul that sins, it shall die."

My *introductory remarks* on the dreadful theme chosen for reflection have had this for their design: To impress on you deeply a sense of the *reality* of sin, and the *danger* to which we are exposed, who were conceived and born in sin, and bear about in the body the mark and the fruits thereof. And in conclusion, let me repeat this, and dwell upon each adjective.

The seven sins — of Pride and Anger, of Lust and Sloth, of Gluttony, of Envy and of Covetousness, are called, in the vocabulary of the Church — *Capital*, *Mortal*, and *Deadly*.

They are **Capital** sins because they affect the head and the life; they make the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint. A capital crime is a crime of which the penalty is death. Capital punishment is that by which the life is taken as forfeit to the State. In those senses Pride and Lust and Envy, and the rest, are Capital Sins.

They are **Mortal** sins because they involve revolt from God's will and God's law. He who commits murder, and adultery, and theft, having his eyes open, and knowing what he does — is in Mortal Sin; for which there is no forgiveness to one who carries the load thereof, unrepentant, beyond the black line of the grave.

They are Deadly sins because their wages is death; and because they deaden the life of the spirit; and because he who walks in pride dies to humility, meekness, and the fear of God, and because, as the Scripture puts it terribly, "She who lives in pleasure, is dead while she lives."

Deadly, Mortal, Capital. With those three descriptive titles let them be branded, that men may know the peril of continuance in them, and, what it concerns us most to know, our need of the precious sacrifice of that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

2. PRIDE.

"Those who walk in pride, He is able to abase." Daniel 4:37

Though writers differ in the order of the enumeration of the Seven Deadly Sins, they agree, in giving the first place in the catalogue to Pride. That sin always stands at the head; and rightly so; for *departure from God,* whatever course it takes, *begins in pride of heart*. It is that offence against Himself which God resists; it is that which blinds the eyes and hardens the heart. And though we know not when or how, yet we do know that some time and somehow God must break down the pride of man and humble him in the dust, before that sin can be forgiven and its eternal consequences can be averted. Those who walk today in pride — in the pride of intellect, of wealth, of ambition, or of inordinate self-reliance — He is able to abase, and sooner or later He will abase — if they are to be rescued from the nethermost Hell, the only place in creation where men of that temper could find themselves at home.

What is Pride? There are other sins which have the nature of pride, though they fall short of it. They are like guide-posts on the way toward the den of this great monster — and, by a brief examination of these, we shall be led to a true conception of the exceeding sinfulness of that crowning sin.

Conceit, vanity, haughtiness, and arrogance — these are akin to pride; they are like ushers and chamberlains, leading toward the royal presence; let us approach it, with these to tell to what we are to come at last.

CONCEIT is the lowest of these forerunners of the primal sin. It is the offence of inferior and weak characters. It consists in claiming to possess what one does not possess, and boasting of something without ground for doing so. Conceit pushes in where she has no business, interferes officiously, and puts on the *air of superiority*. This is not pride, but petty, and often laughable, conceit.

Next comes VANITY; a sin often confounded with Pride, though essentially diverse from it. Vanity has the nature of Pride, but it is Pride diluted and emasculated. Vanity includes *the desire of notice and admiration*, the wish to be looked at, talked about, and praised. A vain woman, for example, adorns herself in the hope that she may attract attention — she studies accomplishments and arts to render herself charming. Having made the most of herself by way of decoration, she watches the effect, and is desolate if it is not what she expected it to be. A vain man has inevitably an oblique glance at other people whom he desires to impress, or in whose homage he finds pleasure.

This is not pride — it is merely vanity; what the Latins call *VANITAS*, that is to say, *hollowness* and *emptiness*. And perhaps there is no character on which a proud man looks with more contempt, than on a vain man"

And next we come to HAUGHTINESS, and this is more serious, for here begins the look of genuine pride. The characteristic of *vanity* is the desire to please — it is the fault of many amiable people with little brains. But in *haughtiness* there are a dash and flavor of real guilt; they bespeak that feeling of superiority to others, and consequent indifference to them, which begins to stir up the wrath of God against the offender. The haughty man carries it with a high head and a high hand — his gait, his manners, show that he deems himself a superior being.

While vanity walks with a mincing air and side-long looks, and, striking a pretty pose, exclaims, "Am I not graceful? Do you not admire me?" — the *haughty* person passes on, indifferent, and wrapped in the consciousness of superiority.

Somewhat beyond this point goes ARROGANCE; that is pride, but pride without good manners; insolent, intolerable, arrogating to itself the deference of others, loud of voice, bold in look, pushing self-assertion to extremes.

Such are the shapes which stand roundabout the citadel of pride; but when we come to PRIDE itself we reach, finally, what is worse than any of these, and harder to cast down.

The Latin word helps us again. Pride is called in that tongue, *SUPERBIA*. It is indeed, when pure and complete, *a superb sin*. *It consists in a settled persuasion and habitual sense of superiority*, and in the consequent disregard of whatever may dispute that claim. It is a grand and stately sin. How unlike are the *great* Superbia — and the *little* Vanitas! Small and silly *Vanity*, athirst for flattery and compliment, running to and fro, making the best figure of herself that she can, and looking for admirers. Lofty, imperial *Pride*, standing with folded arms and serene brow — indifferent to the opinion of a world which it holds to be its inferior, and can afford to despise.

Pride is private judgment in its finished state — insolent, self-sufficient, scorning control. It is the concentration of the entire being on itself — a movement whereby one enters into the citadel and high tower of his own thoughts, and thence looks down on all who pass below. Pride says: "I am the superior of these about me, whether they know it or not. My judgment is better, my opinions are worth more. I am wiser, more honorable, superior every way." This may not be *said* in exact terms: it may be put into polite and courtly language, and uttered without apparent arrogance or haughtiness — but that is the settled and habitual conviction, *a sense of superiority to the rest of the world*.

Pride converts superiors into equals — and equals into inferiors. The idea of a superior is one which it cannot take in. Pride may be born with the man — it may constitute the chief part of his original sin. It may be imbibed from social atmospheric conditions, as malarial poison from the air.

A little boy was learning his catechism; he came to the words, "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters." And he looked at his teacher with surprise, and asked, "Who are my betters?" That was the true spirit of pride. Who are my betters? Who are my superiors? To whom do I owe submission? Who shall dictate to me, or tell me what to think or how to direct my life? Nay, if you come to that, who are my equals? And therefore proud men and women cannot be vain. Why should they study to please, who *deem the rest of mankind their inferiors?* What cares the proud man for the opinion of the world? What cares the proud woman what people think of her? Insensible to flattery, impervious to compliment, from the height of self-sufficiency these look down, reckoning little what others think or do — just so they can think their own way, and hold their own.

This is *Superbia*, the first and the worst of the Seven Deadly Sins.

O! how fearful the hour when, in death, this mortal body shall fall off from a soul which held itself independent of man and God alike — and thought of itself habitually as the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the *beginning* and the *end!*

It may be regarded as a great national calamity when, in the system of government, the state of morals, and the typical character of religion, there is much to foster and develop the spirit of pride in the common heart, and little to help those who would resist the evil. Such, unfortunately, is our condition today and here; and such is the condition of any people whenever this destructive spirit is in the air. *Woe to that people who have an exaggerated and overweening notion of their superiority to the rest of the world!* And woe to that man who arrogates to himself, in his views and opinions on every mooted question, a *practical infallibility*.

The spirit of pride, in this particular manifestation, is the bane of the age. The air is full of brags and boastings — we hear expressions of pity for others who are not as we, and exhortations to them to gird up their loins, and break their bonds, and get into the line of march with us. And then, if it comes to *popularity*, those men are sure to win it who, driven by the demon of their pride, despise authority and reject restraint, who lead the way in new departures in every direction, and make the loudest professions of their ability to guide the thought of the day to loftier heights.

And here, distinctly, my subject touches religion, for he must be blind who cannot see how, in these days, and among our people — Pride has usurped the office of the theologian, the doctor of divinity, and the minister.

Even so, in old times, sinners, inflamed by this identical spirit, gathered themselves together on their plain in the land of Shinar to build a city and a tower whose top might reach unto Heaven. *The record of human imbecility* contains no more valuable chapter than that in which are recorded the schemes for new religious theories which are continually sprouting up out of the pride of men's hearts.

Now, the first thing that strikes us, as we look into these kaleidoscopic images of the Religion of the Future, is the fact that they embody that temper which we are now considering — that entire, that self-delight self-sufficiency on which God has stamped the name of Pride. Intellectual and spiritual Pride runs rampant through this field. The inventor of a new religion thinks that he knows more than is known by entire Christendom, and that God — if there is a God — is not able to teach him anything. In the labyrinth of his own devices, he twists and turns and winds, asking no clue, nor feeling the need of any better guide than his own judgment.

But the pride which thus discloses itself in the attempt at the construction of new religions does much more mischief before it reaches that point. Doctrines which have been believed always, everywhere, and in all churches — are denied, and pronounced unscriptural and erroneous.

The motive which inspires these efforts is Pride. It is the intense addiction of men to views which *they* have formed by superficial study, or, more likely, adopted through their sympathy with that modern spirit of which we spoke before. The tone of modern thought and popular speech on religion and religious themes is pervaded with this first of the Mortal Sins — and these destructives of our day inflate their lungs with it and breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the teachers and disciples of the Scriptures. No trace of humility do we find, no regard for Scripture revelation, no deference to testimony of any kind which contradicts a cherished sentiment or opinion.

There are no finer illustrations of the spirit of Pride in practical action, than those afforded by men who, though well acquainted with the system and the claims of the Scriptures, diverge on other lines, and either assail the Christian church from without, or seek to undermine her foundations from within.

Let us pass to another illustration of this spirit, "The Pride of Life." Do you think that is dead? No; although this is a republic, and titles of nobility and class distinctions have been abolished. The manifestations have changed — yet the temper remains. Hundreds of years ago, when men were divided into *nobles* and *commoners*, the arrogance of the former toward the latter was extreme. It seemed the duty and destiny of the lowly to exist merely for the pleasure and advantage of those above them — to toil and slave for them; to grow thin and squalid, to waste away, and starve and die — that a luxurious and profligate court might fatten, revel, and live at ease. Times have changed, indeed; democracy, the avenger of the poor, has done a marvelous work; but who shall say that the pride of life is dead?

There may be aristocracies more galling, more insolent, than that of *birth* and *blood* — "The Pride of Life." The temper which breeds them is in the soul of man to this day. There must be distinctions among us; social equality is impossible while human nature remains what it is; there must be high, and there must be low. Of old, there were aristocracies of birth and blood: children inherited names and titles, and crests which recalled acts worth remembering; and they had mansions and castles, and broad lands and forests. Of these things little now remains, and that little daily grows less; and yet there are aristocracies, even among ourselves. Not all of them are evil, or contrary to public interest and order: let no man reprove the aristocracy of sound learning, of true culture, and gentle ways, and first-class ability unselfishly devoted to the general good.

But what shall we say of the aristocracy of mere wealth, whose implements are sharpness, shrewdness, and unscrupulous conduct, whose badge is pretentious and extravagant *display*? What shall be said of those whose pride is in the abundance of their possessions, and who in their hearts despise the poor? An aristocracy of wealth only, without heart, or faith, or religion — may be more insufferable, as it is more demoralizing to the public character than any other.

Purse-pride is the lowest form of all; see it, full-blown, when fortunes are rapidly made, and men who do not know the right use of money find themselves suddenly in its possession. This is the sin which is accountable for modern discontent and the alienation and hostility of classes.

After all, there were compensations under the old system which are lacking in the new. An ancient name and title implied *responsibility* — wealth had to pay tribute, in some way, to the poor. But he who today, by shrewdness, cold-blooded management, and selfish combinations, sets himself above the rest, often loses, in the process, the natural care and concern for other men — he has no pity, no compassion; he is a self-made man, and he values himself on the fact. Let others do what he did, and look out for themselves; and they will now enjoy what he has taken in the free chase and wild hunt for wealth. This is pride, hardening men's hearts; and the humble hate them accordingly, and long to strike them down and turn them again to the dust from which they came.

We have among us faithful and honest stewards of wealth; men who order themselves courteously and befittingly in their responsible positions; whose manner and look betray no consciousness of superiority, who never wound those beneath them by arrogant assumption; whose stewardship is profitable to the community. Not of such do I speak.

But there are others whose elevation to power and influence has cost them their eyes and their heart — riches have eaten out the heart, and sealed up the eyes to the true end of existence. There are rich men who shirk every responsibility, and give themselves up to the easy enjoyment of life. There are women among us who have cultivated themselves to the last point of refinement, and seem like reproductions of the *haute noblesse* of other centuries; in person lovely, in manners exquisite, in tastes fastidious and dainty; living on music, art, literature — and shutting out the sight of the gloom and squalour and sorrow of their wretched neighbors. These, also, are daughters of pride; not offensive pride, nor unmannerly, but *aristocratic* in type, which prompts to criticism, to contempt for all outside their select circle, which reveals the secret conviction that *they are the very cream of society, and the redeeming feature of a degenerate day*.

Remember, Pride is the settled, habitual impression of superiority. It is offensively manifested in vulgar and crude people. It is exquisitely and gracefully displayed in the luxurious tenants of the fashionable world. Of such were those fair but intolerable creatures in the time of the French Revolution, whose dainty limbs at last were torn apart by howling mobs, and on whose snowy necks fell the gleaming blade of the guillotine. Better for pride to have had that fearful expiation in this world — than to have passed, full blown and unpunished, into the place of everlasting burnings!

Passing along the circle where these sinners walk, we recognize many other shapes by the unmistakable signs. How can I omit the pride of JOURNALISM, the arrogance of the PRESS? Is there anything much more offensive than the general attitude of the editorial profession as exponents of the spirit of the age? Such no doubt they are; and the *boastfulness*, and *self-confidence*, and *bravado* of the age could not be more ably illustrated. The Press is too often mercenary and unscrupulous — it is oracle, judge, dictator — it is the censor and the satirist, the public detective — through its paid agents it meddles with every man's business, and pushes into every man's house to spy out, interview, and report. It smites whom it chooses, and woe to him who strikes back! No article of the Creed was ever held with more enthusiasm than this, that *the Press is the enlightener of the world, the indispensable aid to success, and the controlling power of the age;* in which tenet of faith, if there be not the quintessence of the spirit of pride, I know not where else to find it.

Nor let us forget to notice those men who, by questionable means, and dubious arts, have won public positions of great influence; nay, rather, who are what they are by dint of bribery, corruption, and the illegal use of wealth. Such men have we seen, high in place in great corporations, in the halls of municipal, state, or national legislation; or even with the *keys of justice* in their hands. It is not of their frauds, their dishonest practices, their guilty progress upward in the scale, that we are now thinking — but solely of the pride which invests them and tells the cause of the trouble.

For such men laugh at the protests of the honest and sincere, they defy public opinion, they despise a community whose moral sense they have helped to debauch; they set themselves above all laws, human and divine, they challenge society to stop them in their career. Nor can you wholly blame them; for there are hundreds and thousands to applaud and abet, to condone the offence, to deny the charge of sin, and say: "We, or anyone else, in the same circumstances, would have done the same things." *There are no prouder souls than those of bad men who first lift themselves by criminal acts above their neighbors, and then despise those neighbors.*

But let me not spare my own profession; the Church is as bad as the world, in the breeding of pride, and in its results. It was pride which first divided Christendom; and pride keeps up the divisions. Pride, in the seventh century, led the Eastern bishops to set up that claim which drew from Gregory the Great his memorable remonstrance, and led him to say, as with prophetic voice, that whoever arrogates to himself the style and title of Universal Bishop of the Catholic Church, is the precursor of Antichrist. It was ambition and pride which subsequently led the Roman pontiffs to set up that very claim. It is pride which hardens men in the delusion that they know better than the Fathers, that the new is preferable to the old, that the Apostolic Church must surrender to them — and not they to the Church. It is pride which sends a minister into his brother's diocese to meddle in his affairs, or makes him rather a *wolf* than a *shepherd* among his own clergy. It is pride that stirs up strife in the parish, between an arrogant and obstinate minister and an equally obstinate and arrogant congregation. And it is pride that sets the leading man or woman to criticizing the pastor and trying to dictate to him as to the *subject* of his sermons or the *manner* of his administration of his parish.

I know not where we should stop if we tried to make a perfect catalogue of the types of this sin. The instances already mentioned are only a few; the more glaring, yet not the most common, for *pride is everywhere*. It may be in your heart all the life long, without your knowing the fact. It is at the bottom of those emotions which torment the sensitive and the shy. It keeps up hostility between unbending and unforgiving adversaries — too proud to speak first, too proud to make advances, they pass each other by in silence, though it would be a relief to make up and be friends.

Pride must answer for the falsehoods told to save self-love and screen from mortification, for lies spoken to hide a shameful act, and stood to for fear of the added shame of confession. Pride imagines affronts where none were intended, and injuries never actually inflicted. It will not stoop to explanation or apology. It keeps some of us from opening our grief, and so saving ourselves years of misery. It divides men from one another, and makes them hard, unforgiving, morose, and cold.

What shall be done with Pride, the foremost of the deadly sins? God knows; and God knows, moreover, when and how best to do it. But meanwhile let the warning be heeded by the proud of heart. There are marks of *special reprobation* against this sin. "God resists the proud." It is a striking expression. There are sins which He seems to overlook; sins which He does not regard as of sufficient importance to call for immediate action, which, for the time, He passes by. But He resists the proud — He rises, and puts forth His arm, and thrusts the proud man back. It may be now, in the time of this mortal life — yet it may not be until that proud and haughty soul approaches the great white throne. But surely, sometime, these men, though cased in steel and hardened to the bitter end, shall be met, thrust through, and flung to their knees before their God.

The history of the world, as disclosed in Holy Scripture, is a record of such judgments on men and on nations; on nations which have been supported on other arms than His, on men who have made their pilgrimage without a prayer for guidance or a petition for His help. From the waste of bygone years, arises the figure of the King of Babylon who, though warned in dream and by the voice of Daniel as interpreter, still held his way, in his strength of heart and trust in himself and his great city and what it contained, and in the forces of the age, until he fell under the rod of God's judgment. Let him be our warning; and before some watcher and holy one comes down from Heaven to us, as we walk in our pride and self-sufficiency, trusting to self and not to God, relying on the spirit of the age and not on the Holy Spirit, believing the lying signs and wonders everywhere displayed to be true; before yet to us some messenger descends crying, "Hew down the tree and cut off the branches, shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit!"

In a word, before God arises and resists us, let us remember our peril and discern the cure. Each vice has its cure in an opposite virtue. The opposite to pride is humility. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word." These are the voices of the old law and of the new — sweet, and clear, and profitable to men — hear them.

And between the new and the old, there at the dividing of time, stands *Christ's Cross*, uplifted on the hills, to wither that deadly sin with perpetual rebuke and to show us how to gain our victory. Humble yourselves before the mighty symbol — and bless God for whatever He sends to humble you; and *practice the lesson taught us in the mission, the life, and the death of Him whose name you bear and in whom we hope to live.*

"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Be this our daily prayer: "O Savior, who by Your cross and precious blood have redeemed us, make Your cross to us the measure of all these things around us, and in imitation of Your humility may we find rest to our souls!"

3. ANGER

"Simeon and Levi are brothers — their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel." Genesis 49:5-7

The subject for this evening is ANGER, the second in the list of mortal sins. Of sins, it must be observed that *they vary in sinfulness*. Those are called deadly, which it is death to the soul not to resist; of these pride stands first in order, and anger second. I shall try to show the deep disgrace of being the slave of this sin; what leads to it, what are its degrees, and by what means its hold on its victim may be weakened and broken off.

Note this first, that there is a marked contrast, in dignity, between this sin and pride. There may be a horrible kind of dignity in sin; some sins put men to greater shame than others. In pride, nothing is more notable than the *lofty air* of the transgressor, whose bearing announces that sense of superiority which forms the habit of his soul.

But a man in a *rage* is a sorry sight. Self-control and self-command are gone, and the wretch appears to be the sport, the tool of some fiend or demon, who exhibits him for the terror or derision of the by-standers.

Pride is a moral habit — a set, hard, and offensive condition of the soul, which, however, remains calm and collected at the poise of complacency and contempt for everything outside itself.

But anger is a tempest, which makes havoc of decency and dignity, and, when at its height, effaces the image of God in His rebellious creature. Like other storms, it announces its approach by signs, and has degrees of violence. The forecasts which tell us whether we are to have a stiff breeze, a gale, or a hurricane, in this moral insanity, are easily read.

First come the contracting of the muscles, the quivering of the lips, knitting the brows, and an ugly light in the eye, which tell that the devil of mad wrath is striving, though as yet within bounds.

Next, as the mad fit grows in force, the passion breaks the barrier and manifests itself in outward act; the voice betrays it, the limbs sympathize; the person thus possessed by the *fiend* rapidly loses control of himself, and soon becomes a mere puppet or marionette, jerked this way and that, until it comes to loud cries and dangerous gestures, and the dishonor of reckless words and acts.

And then, from stage to stage, the storm grows to the fullness of its strength, and bursts upon us in uplifted hand, in blow with the clinched fist, with missile, with weapon, with knife, with pistol, by way of assault and battery, and at last in the article of murder.

Was ever a sight like that, since *Cain* first exhibited himself after that horrid fashion? What dignity, what decency are left? What respect for self, what regard for man, what fear of God? Here is a wretched creature, storming up and down, without balance, curb, or brake — until someone in his senses interposes, to hold him in or fell him to the ground, lest he does further mischief. And this is the victim of the second of the deadly sins.

There have been *times*, and there are *places* in this world, in which it was and still is fully believed that *anger*, in its extreme manifestations, is the sign of a physical possession of the devil. Strange stories may be read, in the Norse and Icelandic literature, of men subject to accesses of diabolical fury who were the objects of terror to all peaceable inhabitants of the land. "No fact in connection with the history of the Northmen is more firmly established, on reliable evidence, than that of *the Berserkir rage* being a species of diabolical possession." Those *Berserkir*, as they were denominated, would go into a state of frenzy wherein the characteristics of humanity disappeared and the functions of the reason were for the time suspended; upon which they would perform acts from which in their sober senses, they must have recoiled; nay, while in that mad fit, these people would assume the qualities and attributes of wild beasts, and rage and snap, bite and tear, grinding the teeth, foaming at the mouth, and behaving like furies!

In them you have a portrait of the passionate man or woman of this or any day, who, though falling short of the absolute ugliness of the original, has the same general air, manner, and semblance, and may thank God Almighty that he runs not to the same extreme. For we believe that, as Christ's sweet gospel of love was preached through those wild heathen regions, the demon-possession gradually passed away, and men were in a measure delivered as the fiends receded before the sign of the uplifted Cross. Yet still, to some extent, the pagan insanity remains, and must, until an end be put to the sorrow and sadness of earth.

We have among us, in our criminal classes, the modern representative of the Berserkir; nay, more, the seeds of that same madness are in every heart which angry passion frequently agitates and whence violent outbreaks occasionally proceed. You yourselves, whenever to any degree you yield to this sin, become to that extent identified with these ancient and modern Berserkirs; and while you shudder at the sight of the red and reeking hand of murder, you forget that the temper which led to that conclusion may be in your own hearts.

For reflect that, in this sin of anger, there are many degrees; it runs up and down a long scale, through pique, sullenness, spite, vindictiveness, bitterness of speech, quarrelsomeness, and cruelty — up to malice, hatred, revenge, and bloodshed. All this while, one thing is wrong: the *heart* is foul, the *will* perverse, the *temper* undisciplined — and the question is not so much about quality as about degree. And woe be to us, when this sin of anger is combined with its elder sister sin of pride. Given, first, a haughty, self-sufficient spirit, and, next, a violent temper — and these two will make the pathway of life a scene of perpetual alarm and distress; and from this being, as from a figure of terror, shall all recede who are able to escape his companionship and fly from his presence.

In the seventh and twelfth cantos of the "Inferno," Dante, with his usual exquisite fitness in assigning penalties to sins, has shown the vulgarity and the heinousness of this offence. In a muddy marsh, naked in limb, and distorted in feature by passion, stand these angry people; they keep on striking at each other with hand, with head, with feet, and gnashing on each other with their teeth. These were they who, once, in the sweet air which the sun makes glad with his bright beams, had in their souls nothing but hateful fumes and bitter smoke, and made their life a turbid horror. And presently appears a river of boiling blood, wherein are struggling those who, in their day, had done violence to their neighbor; the *murderers*, the *Berserkir* of old and latter time — while Centaurs, armed with bows and arrows, running along the banks of the stream, shoot at each as he tries to emerge, and drive them back again into the flood.

Shame, disgrace, and horror attend this capital sin in the commission here — and shall, no doubt, appear in the course of its expiation in the world to come.

Let us proceed to the question of a REMEDY. What *can* be done, what *must* be done, with sinners of this class? The subject has its complications; for anger is a sin with which, when it goes to the uttermost length, the State has to do. Some sins are *secret*, as it were, between a man's soul and God. Some sins are *open* — and the civil magistrate and the officers of the law have control also. No statute was ever made, in human legislatures, against vanity or pride. But anger is one of those sins which the law does notice, and must notice, for the peace of the commonwealth and the safety of human life. A fool may indulge his good opinion of himself to any extent that he pleases, and nobody will interfere. But anger, the instant it passes from thought to manifestation in word and deed, brings the offender within the reach of the law.

And here we come to a problem of no small importance, What to do with our madmen? What to do with these wild beasts whose exploits are matter of daily record, under the head of bloody crime?

The old Roman Empire fell, when the time had come, under the pressure of enormous hordes of *barbarians*, as they were called, who, descending from the gloomy forests of the North, swept like an avalanche through the Southern plains. We have our barbarians also; but they are here, at home, living where we live, watching us from day to day, hiding in the obscure quarters of great cities, nursing wrath, indignation, and anger — and ready, if the chance were given, to rise and fly at our throats!

Out of this vast multitude of dangerous people come forth, one by one, the burglars — every one of whom is ready and prepared for murder — the highway robber, the assassin; and these do their work as they may, under the provocation of real or imagined offence, or under the stimulus of strong drink, which transforms the man into the brute.

Society is then only safe when the criminal classes stand in habitual terror of the law; and yet there have been times when that beneficial fear seemed to have vanished, under the influence of sentimental philanthropism and lax administration of justice — and then every man's life was in peril!

It is almost impossible to believe with what *coolness* the act of murder is sometimes done. One man enters a house, proceeds to his victim's room, kills her, and then walks calmly downstairs and out into the street, mentioning to a member of the household whom he meets on the staircase, "I have just killed my niece, as you will find if you will take the trouble to look into her room."

Another man, offended with his friend for some alleged affront, decides to kill him; but, on being reminded that it is Sunday, admits the unfitness of the day, and says, "Very well; I will wait until Monday." And so, on the Monday, he proceeds to his friend's apartment, reminds him of the design, puts it into execution, and then, descending to the dining-room, sits down to dinner with a sardonic smile.

I do not draw on the imagination in these instances of audacious and atrocious crime, but relate the facts simply as they occurred. And when it comes to this, and when the manifestations of this capital sin are so startling and displayed with such incredible effrontery, it is time to ask the reason why, and to find out, if we can, by what means society is brought to the edge of that abyss. For in days of violence, wherein all laws of God and man are defiled, nothing seems plainer than that men themselves are in fault, in *tolerating what ought not to be endured, and in becoming apologists for sin*.

The growth of crimes of violence is due to these two causes: First, the *familiarity* with them and their loathsome details, which results from minute description and publication.

And, secondly, the comparative immunity of criminals. The first we owe to the public press, the second to our cumbrous forms of legal procedure.

Looking on these scenes, in which God's commandment is defied and the life of peaceable citizens is put in jeopardy, we solemnly arraign the *press* and the *delays of the law*; and to these let us add the false sentiment of a large proportion of the community.

First among the promoters of this deadly sin is the press, which fills its columns daily with the *annals of crime*. There is no need of this; it is positively detrimental to society, and yet it goes on, without diminution — this daily spreading for the people their feast of bloody food. Every quarrel, every controversy, every assault and battery, every assassination and murder, must be related in full, with the circumstances, and minute descriptions of the actors, and, if possible, with portraits, and plans and diagrams of the scene of action. Nothing is more demoralizing than this *publication of crime*. It is a sowing to the wind, whereof men must reap the whirlwind.

And if it be said, in defense of the press, that they publish this barbarous and brutal stuff because the *people like it and take pleasure in reading it*, we shall remind them that the journalist has a high and honorable duty to perform, that he ought to be helping and not hindering the cause of public morals, that he ought to be standing up for righteousness, and religion — and that it is a grievous fall if, instead of this, we find him stirring up this filthy and stinking marsh of pollution that the public may the more easily take in the fumes, instead of driving them back and bidding them retire from the pestilential spot.

And, secondly, we arraign those law-makers and law-administrators who have rendered the punishment of crime a slow and doubtful process. Does one man murder another in cold blood at noonday, and in view of a dozen witnesses? It will be a year, or a year and a half, or two years, before that man pays the penalty with his life — not that there is, or can be, a doubt of his guilt, but because, through a wicked system, by means of *exceptions*, stays of proceedings, appeals, and other ingenious contrivances, the due execution of a righteous sentence is postponed, and the end of justice in part defeated.

How is it that men are allowed to go on shooting, stabbing, braining one another in their savage way? That they are not brought to their senses? That they are not told, distinctly, "This must stop, or we shall abate you as public nuisances whom society will not tolerate within its bounds?"

The *passion of anger is undoubtedly within a man's control* — if he is made to feel that he must control it, he will. If it could be impressed on the minds of all men that righteous retribution for deeds of violence would be certain and swift, the mind would adjust itself to those conditions. What we need is a settled opinion, a habit of thought, on the subject of the punishment of sin. The idea must be fixed in the minds of the community that certain crimes, if committed, will certainly be punished, with the least possible delay. Once get this idea into the minds of the dangerous classes, and the general safety is to a great extent secured.

It has been well said, and nothing is more true, that society is constituted, governed, and kept going by habits of thought. He who has formed or fallen into a fixed habit of thought on a given subject will act on that habit, whether his action be conscious or unconscious, and whether he has his wits about him or no. The habit of a pure and religious childhood and youth may continue to govern, at intervals, one who has degenerated and fallen away; when reason is suspended and only instinct governs, the old impressions will be the determining force.

I remember a wretched man who, having been brought up in church-going habits, had lost his faith, and plunged into gross dissipation; but again and again, when beside himself through intoxication, he would direct his steps toward the House of God, led thither by the habit of better years. It may be said that whatever a man's habitual thoughts and convictions are while sober — the same will they be when he has lost control of himself by strong drink: the operation of the judgment may be suspended, for the time, but he will follow his habitual impressions. If, then, you can plant in a ruffian's mind this fixed idea, that murder is sure to be swiftly punished, and that, beyond a doubt, he who sends another man out of this world will follow within, say, thirty days — that persuasion will influence him unconsciously, even in his sudden fit of passion, and make him slow to imbrue his hand in his brother's blood.

But the administration of the law among us produces the opposite impression. Criminals are led to think of the *punishment* of murder as *doubtful* and *slow*. To obtain a jury may take a very long time; to get a sentence will be difficult; and then delays will ensue, and counsel will know best how to increase them, so that it will be a year or two before the crime is punished, if it ever is.

And meanwhile, another class arrive upon the scene who deserve arraignment, as dangerous to social order: the sentimental philanthropists, who, after a little while, in every case of capital sentence, interpose, and enact their preposterous part. These are those who forget the murdered — and lavish their nauseous sympathy on the murderer! They draw up and sign petitions for pardon or commutation of sentence; who visit the condemned cell with bouquets and light reading, and ask for autographs and locks of hair, until we are ashamed of human nature for developing beings so absurd, and wonder at the feebleness of moral sense which can thus forget the sin — and lift the most cruel, the most brutal, the most wicked of transgressors into objects of admiration and regard!

Nor let us forget the funeral honors often paid to the bodies of executed felons, the disgrace of any community which permits such a defiance of the spirit of the Law, such exaltation of Deadly Crime.

Thus far, of the sin of Anger in its *public* aspects, as dangerous to the life of the individual and the peace of the commonwealth. If the land be defiled with blood — and that special kind of defilement is most horrible in God's sight, as He has told us by the mouth of Isaiah his prophet — we owe it to ourselves, to the scandalous publicity given to the details of crime, to the inefficient and procrastinating administration of justice, to the ingenious methods of escape supplied to criminals, to the indulgence of feeble sentimentalists and sicklied philanthropists, in their efforts to mitigate the rigor of just law, and, if possible, to prevent the execution of its sentence. And in the name of the Righteous God who gave mankind the Decalogue, and assures us that He will by no means spare the guilty — we charge those whom it concerns to see that steps are taken to protect us in our people and our homes, to speed the cause of justice, and to bring the mind and habit of the people into harmony with the spirit of that eternal law which is the safeguard of human institutions.

I have dwelt too long, perhaps, on these aspects of the subject; let us proceed to take it to *ourselves*, as *a present and inward temptation and danger*. With this sin of anger, others are concerned besides the public and notorious offender of whom the police and the law-courts take cognizance. In myriad manifestations it may be traced — in private life and in the domestic sanctuary, where quick tempers, irritable dispositions, and quarrelsome natures multiply the sorrow of life. There be many passionate men and women, who make themselves and everybody about them miserable. How shall such people deal with that *plague of the heart?* What are the *remedies?* And how are they to be applied?

Few things are harder than that of controlling the temper — but it has been done and it can be done. It is a *long* work, a *hard* work, and also a very *simple* work. Doubt not that God Almighty is stronger than the Devil, and that by the help of His grace we can get the victory over any form of sin.

All sins begin within the man, and, so beginning, work outward to the surface. This may not be seen in every sin; but it is seen, and clearly, in the case of anger. It begins in the heart; thence it goes out by way of the blood-vessels, through the cheeks and the face, which flush, or turn white with rage; and then we hear it in the tones of the voice, until finally the whole system vibrates, and the sin takes some final, extreme, and shocking form.

Again, observe that this sin has its degrees. Some people grow angry in an instant and are over it in another. In some, anger is a smoldering fire, covered up, but burning under repression — this is *the anger of the unforgiving and the vengeful, who brood over wrongs, determining to have full satisfaction some time or other*. Among such sinners we rank the *Envious* of our time, who are incessantly raging against social order and capital and wealth, men whom a popular writer has thus described: "We have all wondered at such men. They are the outcome of this age, and of no previous time, as it is also to be hoped that their like may not arise hereafter. They are found everywhere, these agitators, with their excited faces, their nervous utterances, and their furious hatred of all that is."

There is an anger which shows itself in sullen and morose bad-humor, ugly and lowering like a storm-cloud, and enduring for years, and perhaps through life.

Or the malady may show itself in a disposition to irritate and aggravate one's neighbor, with tormenting skill.

Or it may secretly consume the person himself, until the interior becomes a bed of cinders, lifeless and black, where no spark of love, pity, or charity can ever be kindled.

There is anger which finds a vent in destroying property, and dashing things to pieces; and an anger which smites with the fist, or with armed hand.

From the first rising of the flame in the heart until the final outburst in conflagration, is a considerable distance — and the earliest stage is the golden opportunity for resistance. *Meet that devil the instant you feel him stirring in your soul.* Bend your whole force on this one thing, to keep him inside, to prevent him from breaking out of bounds.

And next try to lessen the frequency of these fits of passion — that also is within your power. One reason why people fail so miserably in their efforts to break off their sins, is that they deal with them as if they were destitute of practical common sense, as if *habits of sin* could not be made and unmade just like other habits. Grave sins can be *counted* — you can keep a memorandum of them; you can know how many times you fell yesterday, or the day before, or the day before that; you can write the number down in your note-book.

Now, for a man tempted to fits of passion, it is an important advance to reduce the number. So these are the two things to be done: first, to resist at the beginning, and keep the fiend from breaking loose; and, secondly, to lessen the number of times when the mood comes on you. And with God's blessing on hearty endeavors, these two things can be accomplished.

I myself have seen instances of such triumphs; I could tell you of people who once were so passionate that it would have frightened you to see them — and now give no sign of an angry fit which anyone could perceive. And again I have known people who used to lose their temper many times a day, and now do not lose it above twice or thrice a week. These are important and happy advances; they show a battle, and a partial victory; they promise some day a victory which shall be complete.

Do you ask how long it takes to get as far as this? I answer, that it takes some people years and years, that it will take some all their lives, and that even then they may not have conquered completely. What of that? It is the only thing to do — and God shall reward, with the victor's crown, the patient combatant, who never ceased to strive, who never gave up to the Devil, whose heart and will were right, on whom the grace of God was not bestowed in vain.

And you, O brother, O sister in Christ! who have, and know you have, your own devil to fight in your own troubled soul — hope on, hope ever. Be it a spirit of anger, of envy, of jealousy, or impurity, or whatever other thing there be which can torment mankind, deal with your adversary earnestly, painfully, prayerfully; with high resolve, with strong faith, with courage, with resignation to the necessity so laid upon you; and leave the issue to your God — and your reward is sure to you, and, either here or hereafter, the end shall be victory and the *peace* and *rest* of the saints and the elect, who were tried and refined as by fire.

We walked, last week, together through the *House of Pride*. We saw there the overbearing and haughty, the self-sufficient and conceited; skeptics and free thinkers, new lights and radical reformers, men who reject authority, despise dignities, and hold themselves superior to the people of God, in being without faith and walking by sight only, in believing nothing and fearing nothing but to compromise their own importance.

This evening, we have gone through the *House of Anger* — where are the disturbers of peace, brawlers, and quarrelsome, sullen and spiteful, vindictive and cruel folk, homicides, assassins, murderers. "O my soul, come not into their secret; unto their assembly. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel."

Let us close with some thoughts which may comfort and bless our soul. Of this sin of Anger, the contrary virtue is *Patience*. The perpetual and perfect *example* of patience is our dear and blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In whatever manner they fight, or whatever their weapons, great is the glory of those who overcome, and lasting and eternal their reward. There are people in this world whose tempers are so even that they seem incapable of displeasing God in this way. I do not know that they are to be envied. For the harder the battle — the more splendid must be the spoils of victory; the sorer the struggle — the sweeter the rest. Even among the twelve apostles, and almost the first to be called, were two who, beginning as excitable, passionate, and vindictive men, became mirrors of patience and patterns of charity. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, had a cast of mind and a temper which led their Lord to name them, "the Sons of Thunder," as if they reminded Him of the angry gust, and the lightning bolt which flashes through the overclouded sky. These were they who, on one occasion, jealous of His honor, called for the wholesale destruction of certain villages of Samaritans who had offered Him an affront. But those hot-headed men became, at length, like their Divine Master, full of love to God and His creatures — patient, tender, sympathetic; and one has been known ever since as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." And he, surviving all his brethren, and beholding visions in the desert land, spoke as never man spoke of the Divine compassion, and kept on discoursing of that theme until his calm and purified spirit passed into eternal rest.

These examples, of Jesus Christ, of His apostles, and of many a saint and blessed one since their day, encourage, constrain, and comfort us. Here is a great weight of glory to be gained; let those who will enter these lists of honor, and see whether they also may not behave themselves valiantly, and gain the crown.

4. COVETOUSNESS

"For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the *covetous* — whom the LORD abhors." Psalm 10:3

"*Covetousness*, which is idolatry" Colossians 3:5

"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or *covetous* person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Ephesians 5:5

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For *the love of money* is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." 1 Timothy 6:9-10

The Bible makes short work of our *apologies for sin*. It gives no comfort to those people who take an easy view of transgression and are always ready to palliate crime. Covetousness, for instance, in the widest sense of the word, is a sin common to multitudes; it may sometimes attain to the proportions of a national offence; a whole people may be absorbed in the pursuit of gain, and this will be considered natural and justifiable and advantageous to the State — yet this is, at bottom, the sin of the covetous; and the covetous are they whom God abhors. In what abhorrence, then, must many things be held above, which we deem indispensable to success in life?

We have made some progress on our way from one circle to another of the Kingdom of Sin. We have been in the house of the *Proud*, and in the house of the *Violent*; now we come to another region, where other sinners work out their destruction.

God resists the proud;
He refrains the angry;
but the covetous He *abhors*.

There must be something peculiarly base in Covetousness, that it should inspire Almighty God with deep disgust and indignation.

Covetousness is the inordinate desire for acquisition, the eagerness for gain. It is the sin of him who proposes to himself the heaping up of riches and the acquisition of property — and makes that the sole end and object of existence. The essence of this sin is this, that it is done without order or moderation, and with no motive which could keep the hands clean and purify the heart. The desire of acquisition is not wrong; it is a natural instinct; it is the spring which lifts men out of barbarism and makes them civilized beings. A man has a natural right to property — to the just return of his labor — to the enjoyment of whatever he may acquire by toil and thrift. But the inordinate desire of riches or wealth — the reckless pursuit of them — the wish to possess them solely for the pleasure or power that they bring — the joining of house to house, or of field to field — in the *intense selfishness* which takes no thought, meanwhile, for the interests of others or the commandments of God; these pervert a natural and innocent desire, into a degrading and demoralizing sin.

Covetousness consists, then, of an eager and passionate wish for wealth and property, with no high, honorable, or worthy object in view.

It is also the sin of those who, already in possession of this world's goods, by gift, inheritance, or successful toil, sit comfortably down in the midst of them, bent mainly or only on this one thing — to enjoy their life. And therefore, among these people whom God abhors, we find striking contrasts, and a motley variety.

Here are some who *hoard* up money, as their hundreds grow to thousands, and their thousands to hundreds of thousands, and their hundreds of thousands to millions — living all the while in poverty, if not in squalor, and grudging every cent that they have to spend.

Others again, though enormously wealthy, do nothing praiseworthy with their wealth; it merely stimulates the desire of selfish enjoyment; they spend money freely, but only on themselves, on dresses, and equipage, and entertainments, on villas, and yachts, and horses — toward which luxuries that same passion inclines them, which leads others to the abject humiliation of the *miser's* life.

And between these extreme specimens in this gallery of criminals, we see the dense throng who rest not day or night, in their struggle for wealth — who think, who dream of nothing else; who sacrifice time, health, friends, honor, and conscience to success in that pursuit; who live in nervous apprehension of loss, or elation in the case of gain. There is a great difference in these unfortunate beings:

the *miser*, afraid of his shadow, and hiding his gold and banknotes under a board in the floor, or locking them up in safe deposit vaults, where he can count them at leisure again and again;

the fine lady who airs her splendor in her afternoon drives, and displays her person at the opera and the ball;

the egregious youth who passes among his admirers for an Adonis on the credit of his income or accomplishments; the slave to business, who works on and on and never stops, with the gilded prize before him.

But in reality they are of the same heart and the same blood. *The ruling passion in each is the acquisition of property, or its selfish enjoyment*. The love of money, for itself, and for the advantage which it can command. They belong to the same circle in the Dark Kingdom of Sin; the recording angels write the same bitter things against them all.

It is hard to tell, in these days of doubt and moral confusion, how much reverence men retain for the Holy Scriptures. But if they do believe them to be the Word of God, some expressions therein contained must have a particularly alarming sound. "The love of money," says the apostle, "is the root of all evil." Is this so? What then of our own time, and our own city and country? Walk through any town — and see if there is a stronger love, than that of money? Is not that love the leading motive? Is it not in all classes, high and low, young and old, men and women alike? And this love, says God, is "the root of all evil." It ought to frighten us to remember this, and to think what share we ourselves may have in the cultivation of this root of bitterness, and in the *deadly mischief* that comes up from it, day by day.

One of the *curses* of this age is the haste to get rich. There are two ways of acquiring wealth; one is that of steady and honest, hard work — it is the right way, but it takes a long time, The other way is a short cut; it is the path of clever trickery and dubious expedient, of gambling processes and deceitful devices — and that is the wrong way.

And in the third of the deadly sins, is contained the perfect diagnosis of that disease of our time, of the beginnings of the malady, its course, and progress, and its end. Covetousness is the goal which sets these wretches a-running, and keeps them at their speed; the desire not only to get rich, but to get rich in the shortest possible time.

To buy and sell, to barter and exchange, is no sin — society could not exist without such transactions. To make one's profit by buying and selling, or by any legitimate work, is no sin — civilization could not have come without capital, and capital is the slow acquisition of labor. But there are hollow and fictitious transactions which lie outside of lawful business, as when, for example, it comes to betting on contingencies, and gambling in securities which are not in a man's possession, and of which he will never have a sight. When it demoralizes the public to see the profit that ensues; when one man agrees to sell at a future day what he does not own and may not be able to get, to another man who is to make or lose as the scale happens to turn, and takes the risk in the dark; and when this beautiful arrangement is made simply for the purpose of speculation, and is reducible to a mere bet between the two on a contingency — what shall we say of the men who engage in such transactions, and of those who approve and gladly would imitate? This is not legitimate business; it does not belong to fair and honest trade.

These men are *gamblers*; no other term describes them correctly. And gambling is a sin, whatever form it take; to bet on the value of stocks and bonds, of gold or grain, is the same thing as betting on cards or dice, the speed of a horse, or the accuracy of a shot. And the motive is to make money fast — not by honest toil, not by patient and laudable toil, but by cross-cuts and roundabout ways, and in whatever way promises the quickest results. And this is covetousness, in a degrading form; and if laws could be made to check and stop proceedings of this nature, it would be a blessing to the public.

I cite this as one instance only of the working of the passion to get rich in a hurry; to have great wealth, with the least possible delay; a passion which robs men of the sense of honor and effaces the image of God in the soul. And the worst of it is this: that the people seem to be judicially blinded on the subject — no moral sense is left — they apologize, excuse, shrug their shoulders, and go on without fear. Everyone is prepared to make his bet; to make his little venture; to *turn a penny* if possible; anything to make money, to make it quickly, so that we may have the good of it before we die. And as is the case in sinners of other classes, so with these — people the most unlike are drawn together in the bonds of this transgression. The unprincipled millionaire is own brother to the little street vagrant who plays pitch and dice on the sidewalk; both are doing substantially the same thing. The adventurer who leaves off the pursuit of agriculture in the East, and goes off West to pick up salted diamonds in Arizona, or wash gold in the mines of California — is impelled by the same motive as the bank robber who mines partition walls, and attacks hardened steel — hoping to get in a few hours what the same amount of industry, skill, and perseverance would have enabled him to get as an honest man, though not so fast.

It is the love of money which is the root of all evil; and every day gives proof of this in *the deplorable annals of crime* and the lowering of the standard by which the public measure the acts of men.

Let it not be forgotten that we owe to the spirit of Covetousness, some evils which take an uglier shape every hour, and threaten the security of the people and the stability of our free institutions. It is indirectly at the bottom of that labor agitation whereby, for a long time, one class in the community has been harassing and aggravating all other classes. That agitation is the result of *dissatisfaction* and *discontent*, produced by the sight of overgrown fortunes acquired hurriedly by dubious arts, and used for selfish purposes; of gigantic monopolies which enrich their managers and prevent competition; of corporations formed and controlled for the advantage of a few against the interests of the public. These are evils, and great evils, and no one is to blame for being vexed with them.

But the *remedies proposed* are worse than the grievances themselves; such as the formation of irresponsible organizations, so constituted that their acts, if they venture to act, amount to a conspiracy against the nation and defiance of the law; the investiture of individuals with powers not consistent with the public safety; powers much greater than those of the revolutionary committees in the bloodiest days of history; powers which it is hardly imaginable that any man would try to exercise here and today, and which, if they should be exercised, would amount to a subversion of the rights of the citizen, and would be comparable only to the most desperate deeds of autocratic tyrants.

Covetousness, which made the evil, is responsible for that evil, and also for the proposed methods of abating it — methods abhorrent to the Law of God and the natural sense of justice, and involving a general assault on the freedom and peace of millions of unoffending people, and an attempt to paralyze every department of commerce, industry, and trade! Such are the latest workings of this deadly sin, from which may God send the nation some speedy and perpetual deliverance.

Each of the Deadly Sins has its peculiar way of corrupting the heart.

Of *Covetousness*, the result is to make men sordid and base, envious and discontented.

Pride builds up strong characters; strong, at all events, however offensive.

Anger puts men out of themselves; yet in doing so it invests them with a certain fierceness and terror, and makes them formidable to the view.

But the *covetous* are low down, in the room of the mercenary, the avaricious, the greedy, and dishonest. Their sin is one which kills the life of the soul faster and more surely than either of the former sins; it kills the religious life, it kills the intellectual life.

It is, moreover, a hopeless malady. The proud may become meek, the furious gentle, as was the case with those wrathful sons of Zebedee who were transformed into apostles of peace and love. But what can help the soul which Covetousness devours? That was the sin of Judas Iscariot. There are instances of *haughty* men who have humbled themselves before Almighty God, becoming as little children; there are cases of *adulterers* and impure who have learned to loathe themselves and their past, and, in the prayer, "Make me a clean heart, O God" — have found pardon, pity, and help, and have become preachers of purity and holiness. *Envious* men have grown charitable — and *slothful* men have been changed to valiant soldiers of Christ and the Church. But what hope is there for a mercenary, avaricious, covetous soul? Is it in vain that Holy Scripture and uninspired writers unite in warnings of the peril of the love of riches? "The love of money is the root of all evil," exclaims the apostle. "How hard it is for those who have riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!" It is the voice of the Lord Himself. O thrice banned and awful sin, against which God and man, Christian and pagan, thus take up their parable, and of which the condemnation rings from age to age along the range of human life!

Woe be to us! For surely in this place, and this great city, it is one of our *characteristic sins*. Think what pains are taken to train the children in the art of calculation. Arithmetic, figures, numbers; sums to be done on the blackboard, and sums to be done in the head; mental arithmetic, the habit of rapid and accurate computation. Instinct tells them that this art is of the highest value — the grand object in life is to make money, and the *science of figures* is essential to that design. Look at the colleges throughout the land; especially those of recent origin, or those which have adopted modern ideas. The classics and the humanities have comparatively few disciples. What cares the average youth for the fine arts, and divine philosophy? They may be very fine and very divine, but they do not bring us money; and money is the one thing needful; whereof let us select such studies as shall help us most in its pursuit.

The money-making spirit gives their very look to the streets and the structures which line them. How do trade and commerce flourish, and how meager are the signs of reverence for literature and art! Let us walk about. See what great buildings are here; palaces, indeed, magnificent, oppressive in height and grandeur; and yet not one has a word to say, a sound to utter, to the *mind* or the *soul*. These superb piles of masonry are *the monuments of the triumph of Material* rather than Intellectual wealth; they bear all over the escutcheons and insignia of business; at their feet merchandise is piled in heaps; we think of nothing as we pass, but commerce and trade. Now, commerce and trade are excellent things in themselves, but they are not the *all-in-all* to man; and wherever and whenever they are made the all-in-all, and higher interests are neglected or forgotten, woe to that place and woe to that people! It is well to build these great structures to serve the need of a business community, but there ought to be other structures sacred to the Fine Arts, to Philosophy, to Letters, to Religion; and these ought to be much larger and grander, and still more magnificent; and where that is not the case, and such are few, and comparatively poor and humble — we know that men sacrifice the higher to the lower; that with them the last is first, and what should stand first is last.

Again, *consider how people live.* It is not living. It is madly racing and tearing along, lest any should be left behind. We live here as no people ever lived or ought to live, the victims of what they call "enterprise" and "activity;" of what is really a prodigal expenditure of brain-force and muscle, and" whatever else men "have to waste; and the general motive power of this enterprise and activity is that same desire of this world's goods which drives men onward at their furious rate. It is accounted the greatest of all evils to be poor; all means are lawful which promise wealth; nothing is worth having unless it can be turned to gold. Soft names must be invented to disguise the real character of fraud, crime, and corruption; at the worst, offences must be condoned, for who among us has a right to cast a stone? Time is short, and the time to enjoy life is short; let us make haste and get whatever the world can give, before we go hence and leave it forever.

Who is he who would pass one's life in an atmosphere created by work and material exercise only, and in a society which appears to exist merely for the sake of amassing wealth, and in which the evidence is clear that this incessant addiction to one object and one idea is draining out the spiritual and religious life, and slowly poisoning the public heart?

Sometimes a dreadful feeling comes over a man, as if he were becoming slowly but surely stifled; as if he were contaminated by perpetual contact with those who have no high aim in existence; living it all out here, and getting nothing that will last after they die. Of material possessions only, is the saying true, that "we brought nothing into this world and can carry nothing out." That is not true of man's intellectual and spiritual acquisitions; much that he now possesses, he shall keep in another world; gains from the right use of grace, from holy culture, are good to him hereafter. His *character* is his own forever; his habitual thoughts, his moral convictions; what high ideas, what lofty aspirations, what pure desires he derived from any source — from art, from reverent science, from spiritual philosophy — may be his still after he goes hence; for these belong to that part of our nature which cannot die. But what is to become of the mammon of unrighteousness? What of those arts and appliances whereby it was acquired and increased? It is conceivable that one who has cultivated his mind in higher and useful studies, even though they were not distinctively religious, may gain thereby something which he can carry with him into another state, something which, by God's *divine alchemy*, may be transmuted into a better thing, and set to his credit hereafter.

But it is not conceivable that anything should be left which came of covetousness and avarice, and the *sordid lust of acquisition*; that there can be a place in the treasure-house above for that which a man earned here by gambling in stocks, by betting on rises and falls, by driving sharp bargains, by false swearing as to values, by the *hocus pocus* of margins and corners, by using trust funds fraudulently, by persistent accumulation of wealth with no intention to turn it to account for the benefit of the age — it is not conceivable that anything good can come of *this cauldron of doubled toil and trouble* beyond the tomb. And therefore a man of better mold and finer fibre, who, in the midst of such things bodily, is yet at heart uncontaminated by them, must have hours when he feels like one suffocating and choking, and wishes that he knew how he could get out of them, and crawl away, with whatever vitality is left, to some place where he could attend to higher things, and breathe a more wholesome air — and live as one made in God's image ought to live, and prepare for the life of the world to come. Thus has many a soul protested against the sin of the age, and thus does the victim shudder as he sees the hand lifted to strike him to the heart.

But these soul-smitten and conscience-convicted are in a small minority — and so are likely to remain for many a day. Not while the world lasts will the Kingdom of the Vices be broken up, and still shall this *demon of Covetousness* lord it over us, and draw the foolish into his net; and greatly shall he multiply his allies among the infatuated rich, and the lean and envious poor. Consent, admiration, and approval still attend the lust for gain. For Dives, who sits in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day — there shall be a secret veneration — perhaps not secret but openly confessed — and for the rich fool who said to his soul: "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Such men as these, it will be asserted, have drawn the real prizes in the lottery of life, and have the better part, the only part worth having, as things go.

And that interior conviction of the supreme value of a handsome income and the means to enjoy this present state, will no doubt continue to dictate the course of men and women in the important decisions of life. Parents will still educate their children in those principles; they will bring up their daughters with the idea that their first business is to get rich husbands, so that they shall not cast a second look on any man unless he can give a house, and a carriage, and jewels, and the paraphernalia of a luxurious existence. And men will hunt after heiresses, who, however, are few and rare; and so, until they can be found and captured, men will live without wives, but not without female companions in their stead, such as may be bought and kept for money — God pity the miserable creatures and have mercy on their souls!

Yes, moreover, the married will take care to have small families, because it costs too much to bring up children; and *rigid economy* shall be the rule in every direction, except that of *self-indulgence*, wherein no limits are set to reckless and extravagant display.

Thus is life *poisoned at its spring and fountain-head*, and hearts grow dry and hard; and what beauty is left shall be deceptive, having promise neither of this world nor of that which is to come. Men and women shall lose their fresh springs of romance and idealism, and, far from admiring and loving whatever things are pure, honest, and of good report — they shall come to despise them, and laugh at them and at those who do admire them, with a hollow and ghastly laugh, wherein is the note of total loss of that which it is soul-death and spirit-death to lose. You may find, not far away, those who mock at the poetic, sneer at the romantic, scoff at the ideal, and scowl at religion; and they sink lower and lower down, nor do they know what is the matter. But we know that it is simply this, that *Covetousness*, the third of the Mortal Sins, has them under that iron heel with which it grinds the manhood and the womanhood out of them, and treads their life to the earth, and lays their honor in the dust.

What shall be done for the aged? From one point, only can help be had; from the quarter of Christian Principles and Christian Faith. And yet, why turn that way? Men will laugh you to scorn and refuse to listen. Let me state, by way of conclusion — those old ideas, those fundamental principles, which this stiff-necked generation rejects and denies.

It was thought, of old, that the distinction between the Rich and the Poor was made by Almighty God, that He intends that it shall always exist, that there shall always be rich people, and that the poor shall never cease out of the land.

It was thought, of old, that as the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the *rich* are His stewards and hold their wealth in trust, for the good of the entire community and not for their own selfish behalf — so that to spend much on self, and little for others — is to rob God and man together.

It was thought, of old, that covetousness is idolatry, that God abhors the covetous, and that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was thought, of old, that the estate of poverty is honorable and desirable, because the Son of Man chose it when He came into this world.

It was thought, of old, that for a rich man to sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and take up the cross and follow Christ, was the grandest thing that he could do, and that God would reward that act with the crown of eternal glory.

It was thought, of old, that, the *rich* being liberal, bountiful, and humble-minded — and the *poor* content — each class would help, and bless, and love the other.

These were the old ideas, whereby they fought *the devil of Covetousness, Avarice, and Prodigal Display*. Go forth and proclaim them now in market-place and street, to our own rich and poor; and harken to the sound of derisory laughter, the rattle of jeer and jest with which they will be received by a people formed on modern ideas and wedded to the current theories of the day.

Never mind: thence comes help, and only thence. We point you to Jesus Christ, who of His own will became poor and needy — to His saints, who followed him in that thing — to kings, nobles, Christians, who laid aside crown, sword, mansion, title, and rank, to live and die and be buried among the poor — to men and women, in all ages, who had such thoughts in their hearts and groped about for a way to carry them into effect. Set these up as a sign to the nations; they may be spoken against; but keep silence and leave all to God. The sign shall stand, to warn, to cheer, to enlighten, when the current sets toward the side of storm and night, and when the ignorant crowd hurries past descending to the gates where they that enter must leave all hope behind.

5. LUST

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure — but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1:15.

We come this evening to that subject on which it is at once most necessary and most difficult to speak. Fourth of the deadly sins is Lust — the term includes impurity, immorality, sensual passion, unhallowed love. What sin so horrible, so hopeless?

Love is the first and the last — the highest good. Life without love is death-in-life. God, the Eternal, says of Himself, that He is Love. God nowhere calls Himself Force, or Motion, but "God is Love." And the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit: men must love God, and one another. "And now abides Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." And charity is pure and holy love. What must it be, to do what the devil does, and turn *holy love* into *unholy lust?* What plague is in that sin! What death-sickness, what fanning of black wings of night, what ascending of the smoke of their torment — who are captive in that sin! The best, when corrupted — becomes the worst. No art, no sophistry, can conceal the simple, unrelieved, unmitigated horror of that state, in which impure passion usurps the place of the sacred flame which burns eternally in the bosom of God, which makes the light and glory of the angel host, and assures the salvation of loyal and holy souls.

"To the pure all things are pure." Yes, that is most true. But what of the defiled and the unbelieving? What value in any judgment on the questions now before us, given by the man who does not believe, by the woman already *tainted* and *defiled* by immorality? To such, nothing is pure, and when these apologize for lust or try to smooth down the roughness of the carnal side of life, it is a sign that even their mind and conscience are defiled. And this is the first danger of the hour — that we be deceived by the false judgments of those who represent the spirit of the age; that a perverted public opinion may deprave our moral sense; that our mind and conscience may become so affected by the wide diffusion of the evil, by the frequency of the loathsome sights, by familiarity with this shape of luxury and lust — that we shall no longer be able to discern the real horror of the shadow of this death.

God has set in human nature a fountain and well-spring of Desire. It was, at first, as pure as crystal; and it was intended to set perpetually toward its home and source in the ocean of the love of God. All holy desires proceed from God. And holy desires in us are those, and those only, which proceed from God and tend to God, through any mediate object which is desired and loved in Him according to His will. But desire and love which have not their object in Him, and are not after His will — are unholy. This was the doleful change which came through the Fall, when for the will of God was substituted the will of the flesh, when pure love and holy desire became the foul thing which we call lust. The fountain was poisoned at its source; ever since has it poured forth bitterness and pollution.

When Adam fell, the first result of his transgression was shame; "they knew that they were naked," and they knew what that meant, and they hid themselves among the trees of the Garden, ashamed and conscience-smitten. That deep disgrace is what it was, and ever shall be. But men have become hardened, until they feel it no more. They have lived in that shame. Crazed and mad, they have set up the *lust of the flesh* as a natural and innocent desire. Of this fourth of the Deadly Sins, they have spoken as if it were a virtue; schools of poets have made the praise of the corruptible flesh their special theme; philosophers of the Epicureans and the abandoned have honored it with their commendation; painters and sculptors have gone into unseemly raptures over the study of *the nude* and its incessant presentation to the sight. And when unrestrained by fear of God or faith in God, and able to wallow freely in this mire — men have taken the final step in their madness, and exalted carnal lust into a horrible cultus which they called their religion.

Nothing is so striking to the eye, in those old systems of Paganism which were overthrown by the Religion of the Cross — as their immorality. They were the embodiment of whatever is most corrupt and obscene; masterpieces of the Devil contrived to work eternal alienation between man and God.

Clement, of Alexandria, has painted the portraits of those old systems in colors which will never fade. Awful beyond telling is that picture; I could not relate the tenth part of what he left on record, without sending you from this place with horror and shame in your faces. What an age that was, in which our Savior came! He appeared among defiled and unbelieving men to whom nothing was pure, whose mind and conscience were denied. There, on the one side, were the skeptical inquirers, with their doubts and theories, the infidel philosophers denying God, the immortality of the soul, the existence of the spiritual world, and everything that lost men can deny. And there, on the other side, were the true children of these unstable leaders, whose moral state was too shocking, too revolting to bear description.

This was what Christ encountered; with this was the first battle joined, when the cry went out, along the lines of the Militant Church, "The whole world lies in wickedness, and we know that the Son of God is come." Great were the victories of that first age; but it would be a mistake to suppose that the battle is won. It goes on, it has gone on since then, with varied fortunes. The old trouble is still about us — its *marks* are on the bodies and the souls of men — nor up to this hour has a *remedy* been found for this loathsome disease of immorality and carnal lust, apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is an idle dream that Christ and His disciples expected, as the result of their work, the speedy conversion of the whole world, and the transformation of the sin-struck earth — into a paradise of purity and peace. Not so. Christ came to make Atonement for Sin, and to found the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom was to have long battle with the Powers of Darkness, before the end — and still the war lasts. Human nature is what it was; men are what they were — slaves to sin and lust, unwilling to take on them the yoke of the Savior, to bow before the cross.

The battle today is substantially the battle of the First Age — the Church, against the World; the Faith and principles of the Gospel, against Pagan philosophy and Pagan habits of thought. And the strength of the Deadly Sins lies in their accord with the natural desire of the heart, and that finds its just expression in Pagan principle and Pagan practice.

How does it stand with this Sin of Lust? Its ally, its basis — is a certain naturalistic and materialistic theory of our life — that very theory which, as taught of old, made the earth a sink of corruption. And if today men are going back to Pagan philosophy and Pagan habits of thought, to Pagan arguments, principles, and ideas, be certain of this — that they will also be inclined to take up Pagan notions of morality, and to think as the heathen used to think about these dreadful subjects; to find a glamour in that awful past, to feel compelled to invent excuses and apologies for it, and even to look wistfully to many a scene in that *panorama of vanity and corruption*.

Such is the peril of the hour in which we live: that of following the natural notions of immorality and lust, and justifying the action by appeal to the principles of naturalism and materialism, and setting up the claim that these things are not evil, but laudable, lovely, and of profit to mankind.

Ever since the history of the human race began, that evil spirit who is God's enemy and ours, has maintained a double propaganda in the earth. It exists today, and here, in our city, and among ourselves: The Propaganda of *Infidelity*, and the Propaganda of *Impurity*. That these two work together, always, and in the same direction, seems too plain for anyone to deny it with success. We see this in the dreadful picture of the Gentile civilization as described by Paul the Apostle; in the state of the heathen, as found, ignorant, naked, and immoral, by the missionaries of the cross; and we see it as distinctly as ever in the most logical of the great nations of modern Europe.

France is the land where people have *ideas* and carry them out to their *consequences* — and in France you see, afflicting the better classes and the religious and devout among her sons and daughters, a political propaganda of atheism, and *a literary and artistic carnival of indecency*. There have we beheld the assault of the national government on religion, on its institutions, its symbols, and the people of its ministers; the name of God erased from books of public instruction, the *cross* torn down in schools and courts of justice, the ministers insulted, and, as far as possible, reduced to inaction. There also do we find a licentious literature, culminating in recent works which take rank with the filthiest of any country or any age. There also flourishes a school of art which revels in vulgarity and shame, as if to present the human body to view, in every conceivable and inconceivable attitude of shameful and disgraceful display, where the *province of art* is at its highest and best. The double propaganda thus shows itself at work, in past and present alike; it is accentuated more sharply as we look on with amazement and disgust; and men are found *apologizing* first, and then *applauding*, until, with an exquisite refinement of hypocrisy at which devils must be laughing, these defiled unbelievers venture to say, referring to themselves, "To the pure, all things are pure."

What is our own society? It has almost ceased to have a national tone; the old American life and ways are overlaid and hidden; this is the land to which enormous delegations from other lands migrate; it seems a great assemblage, a conglomerate, of many and strongly contrasted civilizations. Nowhere has there ever been a better field for the devil's double propaganda — and all about us are the signs of his activity. True, there are checks which still restrain the evil — but each day some *barrier* gives way. To keep to the straight and narrow path of settled principle, clean living, and purity of heart — is harder now, for our young people than it was a quarter of a century ago; because a false sentiment, widely influential, condones their excesses, and even approves of their sins.

It is a well-known fact that Societies have been organized among us for the suppression of vice, and it is equally well known that the most violent opponents of the operation of such societies are the free-thinkers and skeptics of the day. How easy would it be to spend a couple of hours in giving instances of our *decadence* and *moral decline!* I shall not attempt any such thing. *Straws show*, it is said, *how the wind blows*; and it will suffice to note, as rapidly as possible, some few matters which justify a deep and growing alarm lest worse than this is near at hand.

Note, first, the execrable quality of much that the people READ. To refer to the public journals, is but to begin — they feed a taste for what is vulgar, coarse, and base, with copious daily supplies of stuff adapted to that unwholesome appetite. But these *annals of degraded life* are supplemented by *fiction* of the same tone; by novels whose heroes and heroines are libertines; and vain and immoral women, and whose plots are a net-work of seduction, adultery, divorce, murder, and suicide — by that special kind of poetry, justly named "the fleshy," in which this vile body of ours, with its stirring passions and their manifestation, forms the perpetual theme.

Sensation-novels, dashed with as much indecency as possible, and *sensuous poetry*, in which the ideal and the fleshly are one and the same thing — form a quality of mind and temper which finds further attraction in the Drama, as we have it now — in large measure a repetition of the old, old story of the working of lust, and garnished with dances which gratify man's sensual appetite and attest woman's debauchery and shame.

Such minds, such souls as these, may turn to art for a new excitement, and they find it in the imported works of foreign schools, such as we have referred to, and in those of a home school which follows the lead of debauchery and devotes itself, mainly if not exclusively, to the delineation of lascivious figures. To these demonstrations of immoral craving and declining taste, response is made by book-stalls and news-stands on the street, and by many a shop-window, where vile wood-cuts and engravings meet the eye, and advance the work of corrupting the public mind. Do doubt the thing would be much worse than it is but for the agency of the police, who, under the indignant protest of decent citizens, compel the dealers in *obscene literature* to keep within bounds, and prevent them from poisoning the atmosphere as thoroughly as they would like to do.

It would be painful to inquire *what kind of life is developed under the influences thus at work for our ruin;* to gauge, with the line and plummet of God's Word — the demoralization of society. For some of this there may be excuse; for example, think how the lowest classes live, in tenements, crowded together in such ways that it is impossible to be decent, that children cannot be brought up like Christians, that young men and women can hardly by any chance be kept honest, chaste, and pure. But what shall be said of some among the higher classes, whose sins are without justification, and denote impurity, irreligion, unbelief?

Look how young girls are trained in softness and luxury — with the one idea of making a figure in society and a brilliant marriage — of making the most of their physical advantages, and alluring the other gender by the arts best adapted to that purpose. See them on the drive through the troubled social sea — at their *lunch-parties* — with a dozen courses and half as many kinds of wine; at the *opera* — immodestly attired; at the *ball*, giving the whole night to dissipation; at the summer haunts of fashion — without due oversight or sense of responsibility, treated with easy familiarity by careless men, and apparently without a vestige of an idea of what is due to a gentlewoman from a man.

Listen to the base gossip among these young women; to the broad speeches and unclean stories by which they are prepared for the final surrender of the last ideas of propriety, and of all faith in the honor and virtue of men.

Then pass on, and let us look at the woman as married — married, perhaps, for her money, or marrying some man for his money, without love, and often without respect — married, but with no idea of living thereafter under marital bonds, resolved to be more free, and to enjoy life more; eager for admiration, athirst for compliments and flattery, so that the husband early drops into a secondary position, and some other man engrosses the larger share of her thoughts. Follow out this subject until you come to the *divorce* suit, and the *separation*, and thence to the next, an *adulterous marriage*, with those whom the Gospel forbid to marry, so long as the spouse lives — snap their fingers at the attempted restriction, and commence a second marriage without fear and without remorse.

We all know that these are the commonest things of the day. We see men freely moving in high social places whom no respectable woman would permit to cross her threshold; notorious immorality condoned for the sake of great wealth; grave social scandals, widely known and openly canvassed, though the actors are received with open hand and made welcome as before. Flirtations going on between people, each of whom has plighted troth, to someone else, and thus stands perjured before man and God. Men lusting after the wives of other men. And married men running after young girls and paying them attention, with the devil's look in the eyes and the devil's thoughts in the heart. And women, young and old, permitting these demonstrations, agreeably entertained and flattered by them, and glad to find themselves still able to make *conquests*.

There are, undoubtedly, people among us who prefer vice — to virtue; and the excitement of passion — to the testimony of a good conscience and a pure heart; who like the stimulus of sin, and would deem it an awful misfortune and an unspeakable affliction — to have to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Our danger is not in the fact that there are such as these in the world — for such have there always been — but *the danger-line is reached when no strong public opinion is against them*, when a general approval hardens their hearts; when others, who would live orderly and honorable lives, find it uphill work to do so; when chastity and modesty are sneered at, and those who will not join hand in hand with the immoral, are voted to be dull and slow, and bidden to stand off, and keep out of the way, and hold their tongues, nor interfere with *this grand business of enjoying the pleasures of this present world.*

I have gone as far as I dare go; and yet have done no more than to *skim the bubbling cauldron*, and take off what comes to the top, leaving the black broth below, a thing too foul to be described. But the *scum* is an index to what is *underneath*; and if these things whereof we have spoken go on in sight — what, do you think, goes on behind closed doors? How appalling must be the record of one night only, when the shadow lies black on this vast city! What crimes must that deep gloom conceal, what sights to scare good angels away!

The slums, the taverns, the dance-halls, and the ball-rooms;
the theaters, high and low, the virtually naked creatures on the stage, and the virtually naked creatures in the box seats;
the men behind the scenes dallying with the actresses;
the banquets, the champagne-suppers, and the sequel;
the printers setting up vile stuff to flood the country with filth by morning light;
the false men, pretending absence on some lawful occasion, and breaking plighted troth and vow;
the agonized wives, keeping the long, maddened vigil of jealousy;
the silly fool dreaming of her admirers in her unchaste slumber;
the young man void of understanding met in the black and dark night by the woman with the attire of a harlot, subtle of heart, whose house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death;
the eye of the adulterer waiting for the twilight, saying, *no man shall see me*, and disguising his face;
the golden youth, spending the small hours from midnight to dawn in dissipation, squandering paternal fortunes and dragging honored names in the dust;
the animals in the drug-houses, and that grimy, gruesome herd whom someone out of the upper air sometimes beholds when he goes, with a policeman to protect him, through the inmost labyrinth of metropolitan corruption.

Great God of Heaven and Earth, and You, Holy Redeemer, what awful sights are these, and what a world it is which You did come to purify and save! And these are the workings of one and the self-same mortal sin; and this is the outcome, when Holy and Eternal Love, the first of virtues and the last, is turned into immoral and unholy lust!

Come and let us leave these horrible paths, and look for a road whereon to walk, clean and free. Each of the deadly sins has its opposite virtue. The counterpart to *lust* is *purity*, the crowning grace of the Gospel. Come away from the haunts of sinners against their own souls, from those who are dead while they live; and let us refresh ourselves in the company of the pure in heart.

First, then, our Blessed Lord Himself was pure; a Lamb without blemish and without spot; unlike us in that one thing, that He was "holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And so, being born of a pure Virgin, and being Himself more pure than the dews of the morning or the freshly driven snow, He made that virtue of Purity a law in His Kingdom, and gave it in germ as a gift in our regeneration.

Next, the Lord testified and said, "Blessed are the pure in heart — for they shall see God." And this He said in that vile age of the world of which we spoke some time ago, and which some would gladly reproduce, in its characteristic sinful deformity, in our own day. In the decadence of the old Roman Empire, in the hearing of the court and the forum, in the ears of Felix and Festus, of the cultured Epicureans at Athens, and the harlots of Corinth, unto the bloated Pharisee and the crafty Sadducee, unto people like ourselves, who loved and justified their sins, as we love and justify ours — did the Lord announce and declare, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And, lest that word should return to Him void, He instituted a divine sacrament, a heavenly and supernatural mystery, so that every believer became a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The material body, which is the object of inordinate desire, and may be made the instrument of fornication and all other deadly sin — Christ "washed, and sanctified, and justified," by "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on men abundantly;" so that each true believer is become a temple of the Holy Spirit, which it is destruction to defile and profane, and thus the Beatitude received its realization.

On the foundation thus laid by their Lord, the Apostles gladly built. They preached of discipline; of self-denial; of keeping the flesh under control, and bringing it into subjection. They talked to men and women of their sins, not in smooth speech, or words to *plaster over* the ulcer and the plague-spot. They bade men flee fornication as a deadly crime which bars from Heaven; they bade women be chaste and pure, and love their husbands and children, and be keepers at home, and adorn themselves with good works. And great were the joy and peace of those who heard the counsel and followed it; blessed, of a truth, were the pure in heart, in their lives, yes, in their heroic death.

Open the Annals of the Martyrs, the Acts of the Saints, and see the courage with which men, matrons, and maidens laid down their lives, rather than suffer pollution in that lascivious age; glorious are the records, clear in silver light, around which *the black cloud of pagan luxury and lust* surges up and glooms, and rolls away, like the storm-drift before the stars. Christ spoke no word in vain: least of all, vainly, *that blessing on the pure*.

Nothing corrupts like fleshly sin; nothing degrades like sensual passion; nothing else brings such frightful punishment. On the other side: no victory is grander than the victory over this sin; nothing more precious than uncontaminated virtue and unspotted honor; nothing lifts a soul so near to God as inner purity. A pure soul cannot be lost — its path is straight to the Face of the Eternal God.

O man, O woman, battling against the devil and the sinful lust of the flesh, hating that which is filthy and unclean, longing to be like the angels, and never relaxing your vigilance against your foe — you are not far from your reward; some mere clouds divide you from it; a little while longer, and those clouds will have dispersed, and with open eye, triumphant over the final assault, and delivered from the burden and temptation of the flesh, you shall receive the promise — *you shall see God*.

Beloved brethren in Christ, we have walked through dangerous places: we have had before us what it is not good to think of. But learn your duty from the very aspect of the world. It is in no hopeful spirit that the preacher bids to self-denial, to self-discipline, to brave resistance, on this perilous ground. He has against him — and full well he knows it — the voice of the heart which is *a sink of everything impure*, which is toward greater license and increased indulgence, the teaching of a school who know no God but Nature, and no law but that law which is in our members, the example, alas! of people who give no help, and increase, by their follies, the demoralization of the day.

O how we long for the aid of Christian women, and their overwhelming influence, in this day of strife and contention! What work they could do as *reformers*, what work for the *purifying* of the world! I think of some not here, I see some before me, fitted by their social position, their gifts, their strong character, to take a position which would help others. I see hardly one, whatever her station, who could not wield some influence over some person or in some direction for good. And yet I see the wrong prevailing over the right, the impure over the pure; the altars of the heathen temples burning with perpetual fire, and the altar of the Lord in the dust. O woman, woman, called of God, redeemed by Christ — think of your duty and your influence!

You know how things go — what books young women read — with what bad men they talk — how they are tempted — the unclean gossip that goes on, the jests which pass the lips — and how women allow men to talk to them in a way in which, of old, one woman could not have talked to another without blushing for shame; how immodestly they dress and how they behave; how they tolerate bad manners and induce familiarity; how they laugh at modest women, and term them prudes and cowards; how one season in society will take the *bloom* from the flower and the *modest look* from the eyes. And you look on, and make no protest — perhaps you even encourage immorality by your example. What can we do without your help? And why, slaves to fashion, and blinded followers of types of a most unworthy womanhood — do you let us go on speaking to the winds, and hearing no response to our protests except their echoes through the empty air?

We say to one, we say to all: This is a subject of vital consequence to your own *souls* and to the *society* in which we move. It is nothing less than matter of life or death.

We say to one, we say to all: Christ and His Apostles are right, and atheistic philosophy, be the era what it may, is wrong. Men may fall away from the faith, heathen morals and manners may be revived, are may become the ministrant to sin, and *women may go dressed like harlots and say it is not wrong*, and men may applaud. But it is wrong, and a shame, and a disgrace, and a mortal sin, of which the wages is death.

We say to one, we say to all: That inordinate and lustful desire is a devil; and that you must fight it by prayer, by abstinence, by obedience to the precepts of the Church; by flight; by self-inflicted pain if necessary, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

These things we say, to one, to all, to high and low, to rich and poor, to men and women — and there we leave it. Perhaps some may have grace to heed the voice; probably the greater part will go their way, and do as they think best; and some will call us hard names, and cry out that we are behind the age, and morbid, and ignorant. Let them so take up their parable, and so let them curse — but the day comes that shall burn as an oven, and then shall they know, if they know it not already, that God gave them full warning, and that, of a truth, there was a prophet among them!

6. ENVY, GLUTTONY, SLOTH

"Let him who does wrong, continue to do wrong;
let him who is vile, continue to be vile;
let him who does right, continue to do right;
and let him who is holy, continue to be holy."
Revelation 22:11

In announcing as the subject of these conferences, "The Seven Deadly Sins," it was in the mind of the preacher that there would not be opportunity at this time to discuss them all. We have considered four: Pride, Anger, Covetousness, and Lust. Three more remain to complete the execrable syndicate — Envy, Gluttony, and Sloth — to each of which an hour's reflection might profitably be dedicated. But I must close this course tonight, and shall have to dismiss, with a very few words, this final group of the enemies of our peace.

Of **GLUTTONY**, it may be said that it is rather a private than a public sin; it is not committed in full view of the world; the glutton is known as such to those who see him devouring his meal and distending himself with his foods and drinks, to the shame of his manhood.

Nor yet does the **SLUGGARD** make any show among us; and the trouble with him is, that his indolence and laziness prevent him from doing anything worthy of note. This is the man who hides his talent in the earth; who, yielding to an inert disposition — idles his life away; who has no business, no profession, or, if he has one, neglects his duty and leaves his trust unfulfilled. This, also, is to live in deadly sin; to be an inhabitant of a grand, busy, working world like this — and yet stand all the day idle, or *make it one's chief business to avoid exertion*. Of these dull and low-class animals, it were well to draw and study the pictures, did the time permit; but it does not.

I must, however, speak somewhat more at length upon the sin of **ENVY**; and, having done so, let us then seek a tranquil, if not a cheerful, exit from the somber and polluting places through which we have been walking together.

Envy stands last in the catalogue of the mortal sins. The wages of sin is death; and in this sin of envy, we reach the black and bitter end. In other sins, some transitory pleasure compensates for the loss of light and grace: but envy brings torment, and torment only — it is a mere anticipation of the pains of Hell. All sins begin in pride and self-will. All sin ends, after death, the judgment, and the final separation between the evil and the good, in envy, which burns and gnaws, a fire that cannot be quenched and a worm that never can die.

These are *the generations of sin*, from the height to the depth, ever downward, robbing men little by little of peace, and leaving them at last in the shadow of despair. In all the mortal sins but this, the transgressor finds *some gratification* while the time for sinning lasts: he has, as the Scripture expresses it, *"the pleasure of sin for a season."*

The *proud* man enjoys the sense of superiority to others.

The *angry* man finds relief in the outburst of his rage.

The covetous man may count his securities and weigh his gold.

The *voluptuary* thinks no sensations so exquisite as those which he, in his lustfulness, enjoys.

The *glutton* and the *sluggard* ask nothing better than the pleasures of the table, and the comfort of luxurious repose.

Envy alone brings no comfort and no satisfaction.

That spirit of . . .
unrest and discontent;
irritation at the sight of another's prosperity;
uneasiness and unhappiness because other men are rich and comfortable and better off;
morbid temper of jealousy and ill-will which inspires the wish to pull down other men from their places, and level social distinctions;
miserable sentiment, part grief, part spite, part rage, induced by comparison of one's own lot with that of someone else who is more popular, more influential, more successful in his life — that is Envy, the hopeless sin, the cheerless sin, the sin which brings no ray of light to the soul. And well may we recoil from the entrance into that deadly sin, for it is disclosed in this age, in vast proportions, as *the ruling demon of the lower classes of society*.

Demagogue and false prophet are everywhere at work stirring up the minds of the poor and those who labor with their hands, and filling them with the spirit of envy, until it comes to a general hatred of everyone above them, and a desire to abolish all distinctions, and reduce the entire community to a uniform level of social equality. Mark well this devilish work. It is not that of the poor man's advocate and friend. If the poor suffer — may God bless and speed those who, in love, espouse their cause, those who seek to better their condition, and make them happier and more secure.

But no man makes any other man happy, who sows the seed of envy in his heart; and that is the work of the professional agitators of the day — to stir up the poor, to make them jealous, ambitious, envious of wealth and rank, to set them on thinking by what revolutionary steps they may upset what now exists and bring some new system into being in which they shall be the rulers and the kings.

Social agitation, as now carried on, is a mighty engine for the propagation and efficient action of the last and worst of the deadly sins. It is a movement on the line of that one sin which kills spiritual life and eradicates the joy of existence. It is a furious crusade against the one and only principle of happiness and peace. Envy and love cannot dwell together; one must destroy the other — if love cannot thrust out envy — then envy will asphyxiate and suffocate love. And where envy rules the soul — there has already commenced the torment of the damned which has begun on earth, which must continue beyond the grave.

For what but envy and eternal torture can possess the souls of the lost? To look, from their place, upon the blessed repose of the saints; to see the gladness of God's elect, to catch the distant shining of Heaven's gate, and perhaps some ray of the glory of the King in His beauty — and yet to lie there in despair, cursing men, angels, and God, and yet unable to die — what else can be the *death-in-life*, the second death?

Here ends the course of sin; to this *conclusion* it comes in the kingdom of the vices. From pride, proud anger, and ambition, through ease and luxury, through profligacy and intemperance, through things unchaste, immodest, and impure; through covetousness which is idolatry, down to that dark place where bitter envy only survives — the perpetual torment of spirits capable of no emotion but that of hatred of the good which they threw away, of lost souls, of whom the Lord declared, describing their eternal state, "their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched."

Who that has read the immortal poem can forget the line with which the first book of the *"Divine Comedy"* ends? Dante and his guide had passed through the "Inferno; "they had traversed its horrible circles, to the very end; and at last they ascended to the bright world again; they saw those beautiful things which Heaven discloses, and they came forth to re-behold the stars.

Let it be so with us. We have passed through that Hell-on-Earth, the House of Sin; we have seen what crime and woe are there. Let us emerge from these depressing meditations, and look up to see the stars of God, shining in their clear light above this troubled world that lies in wickedness. For, all the while, though men continue in sin, and say that it is not sin, and riot in ungodliness, and wander and stumble on the dark mountains — there are above them those celestial stars which God has set in the firmament to give light on the earth; the signs of a holy truth and righteousness, of purity and honesty, of simplicity and sincerity, of humility and love — cheering the faithful, presenting the ideal of a noble life, telling where *peace* may be found and *pardon* may be sought. Toward these clear stars, let us direct our eyes as we come up from the sight of unholy and godless living — and let them show us henceforth the road which leads men forth from the Kingdom of Darkness, Night, and Everlasting Death.

It may be difficult, it might be rash, to try to classify the *Beatitudes* so as to set each against someone Mortal Sin; but the general bearing on our subject is clear. The blessing is for the humble, the godly, the merciful, the mourners, the pure, the gentle, and those on whom the world looks down. There is no blessing, no word of comfort here for men who walk not thus with God. And these sweet words, the first official utterances of the Savior, are helps to everyone who flies the face of sin.

Look next at the *prayer* which Jesus taught us, and which bears His Name. It has seven petitions, and here also is a strange correspondence with the Seven Deadly Sins. "Hallowed be Your Name." That strikes at the monster of pride-for pride dies away when man prostrates himself and adores the Sacred Name.

"Your Kingdom come:" it is the petition of those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and not like the covetous, the treasures which fade away.

Sloth is next transfixed by the prayer, "May Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" — with promptness, alacrity, and eagerness, with a zeal like that of the Angels above us, our examples of a perfect service.

"Give us this day our daily bread;" what *suffices*, and not a *surfeit* like that in which the glutton would rejoice.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;" and how must anger, hatred, and malice have died out, when a man thus prays!

"And lead us not into temptation" those temptations which are in the world through lust: "but deliver us from evil;" and what greater evil than that spirit of *envy*, which poisons every joy? And who is the Evil One from whom we would gladly be delivered but the Devil, of whom we read that "through his envy of God, sin and death came into the world?"

So spoke the Lord to us, and after this manner did He teach us to pray. And when He went up on high, leading captivity captive, He gave gifts to man. Notable among them are *the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit*, "the spirit," or spiritual gift, "of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and spiritual strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, the spirit of holy fear." Each of those gifts is a corrective to some mortal sin. The spirit of wisdom secures the submission of the intellect to mysteries revealed by God; for in the Church "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of men, nor the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to naught," which divine wisdom whoever receives will lay aside his pride and become as a little child before the teacher.

The spirit of understanding gives that quiet tone to the character which is seen where men, deeply versed in human science and learning and knowing what they know in God, are indifferent to strife and contention and the tumult about them, and wait the hour when we shall know even as we are known.

Wisdom is that gift which helps us to weigh the world and see what it comes to, to choose the good and refuse the evil; and those who have it neither covet nor desire the prizes of a system which they have learned to despise.

Spiritual strength protects from the insidious approach of inordinate desire and carnal passion, enabling a man to keep the body under control, and bring it into subjection.

By knowledge we comprehend God's loving purposes toward us, and get an insight into His providential government of the world; after which we fret not ourselves because of the ungodly, neither are envious against the evil-doers, because all shall at last be well.

True godliness makes pure and clean living; and holy fear casts out idleness and sloth. For we know that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and that they alone who endure to the end shall be saved. And it is holy fear which arouses the careless, and wakens the sleeper, and fills with beneficial dread, lest one himself might be a castaway!

And, finally, in the rule of personal devotion, that same sacred numeral is traced. There are *Seven Psalms of Penitence*, for instance, to be recited against the Seven Capital Sins.

And there were *Seven Effusions of Christ's precious Blood*, which flowed as the all-sufficient price for sin: in the Circumcision, the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Coronation with thorns, the stripping off the garments, the nailing on the cross, the piercing with the speak after death.

Seven utterances went forth from His lips while He hung on Calvary. To Magdalene did He first appear in His resurrection; to her out of whom He had cast seven devils. To seven disciples did He show Himself that beautiful morning on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Let strength and help come to us in these divine mysteries of the gospel; and since we also are liable to temptation to those seven forms of dreadful sin, let us recall, in the hour of need, these sevens of wonders and *graces*, of *prayers*, and *wounds*, and *utterances*, which have been to many a soul the means of extrication when the fatal net was spread, and when the Enemy stood ready to overpower and destroy.

My work is finished. It remains only to add some concluding words.

Powerless, helpless, are the intellect, the logical faculty, the skill of man, before the overwhelming fact of sin. Sin cannot be denied, it cannot be reasoned out of existence; by no art can it be removed from the factors of our life. There it stands, a very present trouble, from one generation to another. Well has this been observed, that human nature has never changed for the better, in the slightest degree, excepting in so far as the grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has entered there to work a cure in its radical defects.

"The heart of man, though instructed by the sublimest dogmas, illumined by the brightest lights of science, guided by pure philosophical research, and surrounded by the refinements of civilization, today as ever preserves its instincts for ferocity, brutality, and sensuality!" It is still the same bubbling fountain of passion; not even Christianity has been able to purify it, save in those separate instances in which, one by one, souls have been converted to Christ, and transformed into His likeness by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

But as for those brutal, ferocious, and sensual instincts, those selfish, sordid, and ignoble desires and appetites, which still constitute, as they ever have constituted, the curse and shame of humanity — no earthly art, no finite power, nor science, nor knowledge, nor learning of this world, can subdue them — much less eradicate them. Helpless and hopeless shall man stand, as he has stood, before the enemies of his honor and his repose; perhaps regarding them with the loathing which their aspect is calculated to inspire; perhaps overpowered by a sense of his inability to cope with them, until, alas! he abandons the thought of doing so, and ends in the delirious conclusion that, after all, sin is but an empty word, and that there is no such thing.

Like the foe at midnight, who first applies chloroform to the face of the sleeper, and having thus stupefied him, proceeds to ransack the house — so sin often stupefies its victim until he is no longer conscious of its presence, and makes no further effort to resist. Man, alone, can do nothing against sin. Its destruction, and the taking away of the horrible thing, in its present effects and its future consequences, is a superhuman work — it calls for the interposition of a God. The strong man armed keeps his palace, until a stronger than he comes, and takes away his armor wherein he trusts, and divides the spoils. That was the work of Him who came and redeemed sinners. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "Without shedding of blood is no remission." But in the Blood of Jesus Christ, whoever will may wash and be clean. That is and shall be *the one remedy for Sin*, while the world shall stand, and until the times of the restitution of all things, when the earth and the heavens that now are shall be destroyed, and God shall bring in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

"But in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness!" 2 Peter 3:13