

MOODY'S LATEST SERMONS

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by Dwight L. Moody

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SERMON SIX -

MARY AND MARTHA

MARY of Bethany is one of the most famous women in history, and yet there is very little that she ever did that the world would call great. I can find only ten words recorded that fell from her lips. We are not told that she was beautiful, or that she was accomplished; we are quite sure that she never went to any college, or spoke from any platform; we do not know that she ever exhorted or led a Bible class. Nothing of that kind is told of her, and yet she is one of the most famous women of history.

All four evangelists have something to say about Mary. In the 10th chapter of Luke we first catch sight of her. In that chapter CHRIST sent out His seventy disciples. They came back jubilant, and He checked their spirit and told them to rejoice that their names were written in Heaven. A little further on we come to a practical kind of religion, in the story of the good Samaritan. Then we come to Mary, who would probably be considered by many who like the good Samaritan, as a very impractical woman.

Our first glimpse of the home at Bethany is a very humiliating scene. Martha brings a complaint against her sister. Picture the company gathered there: CHRIST and His apostles are sitting with Mary, when Martha bursts into the room with a complaint against her sister. Luke 10:38-42:

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at JESUS' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore, that she help me."

Now comes the rebuke: **"And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."**

This homeless Preacher had come into that home to light it up, and He made it one of the most famous homes in all history. JESUS rebuked Martha. I do not doubt for a moment that she was a follower of JESUS as well as Mary. They both loved the Savior. Martha had received Him into her home, and it might have been that she was the first of that family to receive CHRIST into her heart; but the two sisters were unlike each other. One wanted to do, to serve; the other wanted to

receive from CHRIST that she might serve Him better.

There was another difference between those two sisters, and I think I can best explain by telling you an incident in my own life.

I was going through Chicago once, when a prominent man called upon me, sat down at too table by my side, and said, "Mr. Moody, I want you to help me"; and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

I said, "What! is it possible that you have lost your hope?"

"No," he said, "Are you not still superintendent of that large Sabbath School?"

"Yes."

"And are you not in good standing in your church?";

"Yes."

"Is there any known sin that has come into your life and separated you from GOD?"

"No."

"Then," I said, "what do you want?"

"Well," he said, "the fact is, my wife has something that I haven't got. She has something that keeps her in perfect peace, and I have to hold on all the time to keep my religion. And now," he said, "I want you to help me . . ." That was the difference between those two sisters. Both loved CHRIST, but Martha was one of these fretful, anxious, worried women, a little out of temper now and then. Are you acquainted with any like her? I think that we meet about ten thousand Marthas to one Mary.

A great many people seem to think that to be irritable is nothing very serious, and are apt to excuse themselves by saying that they are tired and overworked. I haven't any doubt but that was true in I regard to Martha. A good many Christian workers are overworked, but that is no excuse for losing one's temper.

A prominent London clergyman made the statement a few years ago that he hadn't been ruffled in his temper for twenty years. I thought that was a most extraordinary thing for a man that had a large parish right in the heart of London, and so many curates and co-workers; a public man pulled and hauled in all directions. I had a talk with him, and a gentleman was there who said,

"I think that Mr. Moody ought to be excused because he has so much on hand."

"Not a bit of it," said the clergyman; "no man ought to undertake so much Christian work that it wears him out, and makes him irritable and fretful."

I confess that I did have so many things on hand that I used to let little things annoy me. Now, that was Martha exactly. It is a habit that grows upon people. I know some Christians who are so

irritable and so impatient that it is pretty hard to get on with them.

A mother was baking one day, and her little child that was nearer her heart, probably, than anyone else in the world, came up to the table and took hold of the basin and tipped the dough on the floor. The mother struck the child, and said she was always in her way.

Only a few weeks after the child sickened, and when she was delirious she said,

"Mother, will I be in the way of the angels?"

Do you think the mother ever forgave herself for that harsh word and angry act?

I remember hearing of a little child that had gone out into the field and picked a bouquet of wild flowers, that she wanted to bring to her mother. Her mother was talking with a neighbor when she came, and the little thing came running up and said:

"Mamma, mamma, these flowers are for you!" The mother said, "Hush, child, I am talking."

But the little child pulled at her mother's dress again and said, "They are for you, mamma," and her heart was full of joy to think she had brought a little bouquet to her mother. The mother pushed the child away, and because she cried the mother put her into a dark closet to punish her.

That is what the child got for bringing a little bouquet to its mother!

It doesn't seem of much importance that we are sometimes irritable in the home; but what effect will it have on your family?

SINS OF WOMEN

Now I honestly believe that this is the great sin of women. We men are guilty of this and many other sins, and our prisons are full of men. Women stay at home more than the men, and it is mostly in the home life that women sin. Many have such a habit of quick, sharp speaking. A woman's tongue is sometimes very sharp, and it cuts, it stings. I believe that was the trouble with Martha. It was very unkind of her to come in before that company of men, and enter a complaint against Mary. Don't you think that she ought to have had more self-control? Would CHRIST have rebuked her if she had not been wrong? that rebuke has come down nineteen hundred years:

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things."

We must stop worrying and fretting if we want real power with GOD and with man.

Some gentlemen were discussing which one of these sisters would make the better wife, and one said that he would prefer "Martha before dinner, and Mary after dinner." I beg to differ with him; give me Mary all the time. If I had to eat a dinner that was prepared by a fretful, irritable woman, it would not taste half so sweet.

I think Mary is a good deal better all around.

OFF TO HEAR CHRIST

I can imagine that Mary was in the habit of slipping off to the temple very often to hear CHRIST. Whenever He came into the city, she was there. Martha would remonstrate. She would say, "Monday, this is wash day. We must have our washing done anyway."

But Mary would say, "CHRIST won't be here long. He will soon be gone from Jerusalem, and I am going to get all I can from Him."

And it may be one Monday that Martha stayed at home and did the work, and Mary slipped over into the temple, and came back and told Martha that she had heard CHRIST say, "**Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I WILL give you rest.**" Wasn't that better than attending to the washing? I would say, let the washing go for a little while, if I could get such a feast of fat things.

Then Tuesday, ironing day; and Martha remonstrates again, but Mary must go. She must get all that she can. She was going to drink deep because she needed it. It is a great thing to drink from CHRIST's fullness when you can, so that when the time comes that you need grace you will have it, and your soul will be kept in perfect peace and perfect rest.

I do not think that Mary was a shirk. JESUS never made people lazy, and never will. Perhaps when Mary came back from the temple she may have sat up late at night to help Martha with the mending, or she may have risen early and done some of the ironing.

I don't believe she made it any harder for Martha by following CHRIST. If you are really serving Him you don't make it any harder for those around you; you will help them and save them work in every way you can. I like what Mr. Morgan says about this. He says that the "**also**" in verse thirty-nine, - "**which also sat at Jesus' feet**" - means that Mary did her share of the work and in addition sat at JESUS' feet. She hurried her work, perhaps, that she might have time to be with the Master.

DANGERS OF OVERWORK

Now another thing: It may be that Martha not only overworked, but did not take care of her health. Some people get so interested in the Lord's work that they don't eat and sleep regularly.

I met a city missionary who was the most jaded person I had seen for a long time. She looked as if she hadn't a friend in the world; her life was nearly all gone.

I said: "I hope you are blessed in your work."

"Oh, yes," she said, "it is a blessed work."

"I hope you enjoy it."

"Yes," she said, "but I get so tired."

"What, tired *of* the work or tired *in* it?"

"Oh, never tired of the work, but I do get tired in it."

I said, "I don't think that CHRIST is a hard master, or wants His children to get worn out. Do you take one day out of seven to rest?"

"Oh, no, we never think of that! Thirteen of us are employed by a wealthy lady who thinks that because we are doing the Lord's work we don't need any rest for the body.

That is a great mistake. This woman worked thirteen or fourteen hours a day, seven days in the week. and of course her body was worn out. When the body gets tired the mind gets tired, and then we are apt to become irritable. So it is very important that we take good care of the body. Very that people get into a nervous state simply for the lack of food and sleep.

Do you remember that Elijah got under that juniper tree and laid down and wished himself dead? There was GOD's representative on earth, the man that stood nearer to the throne of GOD than any man on the face of the earth at that time, wishing himself dead! An angel came and woke him up, and said, "**Arise and eat,**" and there was a cake there on the coals and a cruse of water, and he got refreshed.

After he got refreshed, he fell asleep again. I presume he hadn't had any sleep for days and nights; perhaps hadn't had any food; he was so full of zeal. The zeal of the Lord was just eating him right up. He had another sleep, and the angel woke him up again and said, "**Arise and eat.**" and he rose, and there was a cake that had been cooked, and a cruse of water. The Lord didn't upbraid him then; the Lord didn't test him then. He fed him and got him rested, and then when He got him off into Horeb, He said, "**What doest thou here, Elijah?**" Then GOD took him in hand and dealt with him; but He fed him first and got him rested.

I think very often Christians get into a nervous state when they need food and sleep. In these days of rush and bustle, people think the world can't get on without them. That is like Martha. She thought that whole house depended upon her, and things must be done in time; and when JESUS came to the house He must have the very best dinner that could be gotten up in all Bethany; and while she was fretting and worrying and getting the dinner, Mary was just sitting at His feet, drinking in of His fullness until her soul was refreshed.

Now there are two dangers you want to keep in mind. If you are active and neglect communion, it won't be long before you get into Martha's state. You are sure to get there; it is inevitable. Then there may be so much communion that you neglect to be practical - that is another danger. If we want real peace and joy, we must keep the two together. We must be practical, and yet we must have communion. I have yet to find a Christian worker in this or any other country that has had success any length of time that has neglected communion. You don't lose anything by going away alone every day, and having a little season with GOD alone; that is where you get strength, that is where you get power.

And it is not only to go apart to pray. Some people say to me,

"You know, Mr. Moody, I pray, but after I have prayed five minutes my mind wanders and goes off in all directions; I can't pray more than four or five minutes at a time, and hold my thoughts."

Well, there is something that is higher than that. When we are really communing, it is not only our talking to GOD, but GOD talking to us. Do you think that Moses was up in the mountain forty days and forty nights praying to GOD all the time? No flesh and blood could stand that. I can imagine during those forty days and forty nights Moses asked GOD a great many questions, and GOD answered a great many.

I think that if GOD should take me up into a mountain and talk with me, I should ask Him a great many questions; and I have no doubt that during those forty days Moses asked GOD a great many questions. GOD talked to Moses, took him into His secret pavilion, and told him the history of the world. I do not believe he would have ever written those five books if he hadn't had those days and nights in the mountain with GOD. And what days and nights they must have been! that is when he came down with a shining face. His face was lit up with the glory of that upper world.

I believe that Mary asked JESUS a great many questions, and that He told her a great many secrets. Perhaps she learned many things that even the disciples didn't know. All the disciples, as someone has said, were very near CHRIST, but the seventy that He sent out were nearer than the rest, and the twelve were nearer than the seventy, and the three, Peter, James and John, were nearer than the twelve. But I have an idea that Mary was nearer than any of them.

Those men were constantly discussing who should be the greatest, but Mary had no thought of being the greatest. In JESUS' estimation she may have been the greatest because she only sought to sit at His feet like a little child, and learn of Him, and obey Him.

MARY IN TROUBLE

Mary's communion with JESUS brought her so near to His heart that when the time of trouble came she knew where to go for comfort. A great many people do not learn that secret in prosperity, and so when the billows come rolling up against them, they don't know which way to turn. The darkest and most wretched place on the face of the earth, I think, is a home where death has entered, but where CHRIST is unknown.

They have no hope of a resurrection, no hope of a brighter day coming.

I can imagine that one day Lazarus came into the house with a hot, burning fever in his head, and said to his two sisters:

"I am afraid that I have a fever." Perhaps a fever that had taken away the father and mother a little while before.

His sisters were greatly alarmed. Everything was done to break up that fever, but in vain. Then they send off into the city of Jerusalem for their family physician, but his remedies also fail. At last the doctor comes out of that sick chamber - many of us have traveled this road - and shakes

his head, and says:

"There is no hope."

Lazarus is going to leave them, and Mary's first thought is, where is JESUS of Nazareth? They never needed Him more than at that very hour. It is said of Jonathan Edwards that when dying of small-pox, he said:

"Where is my old friend, JESUS of Nazareth?"

My friends, the hour is coming when you will need Him. Mark that! You may think that you can get on very well without Him now, but the hour is surely coming when you will need Him. The hour had come when Mary and Martha needed Him as a comforter.

They called a messenger and sent him off to find JESUS. Perhaps he hadn't been gone two hours before Lazarus died. In that hot country a man has to be buried the same day. In Jerusalem I was shocked to find a man who died in the morning was buried in the afternoon. Sometimes a man would be apparently in good health in the morning, and that night he was in his grave.

Those two sisters closed their brother's eyes in death, and heard his last message - he might have left a message for CHRIST. They put the last kiss on his cheek, and then followed him to the sepulchre, and saw the stone rolled to the door. Then they went sorrowfully back to their desolate home. How they longed for CHRIST to come!

One day and night pass, and He does not come. The second and third day and night pass, and He does not come. When death enters a home, and some members of the family are at a distance, how we watch for the train to bring them back! How we long for their sympathy and comfort in that hour!

The fourth day came, and the messenger returned. How eagerly those sisters inquire if he had found JESUS!

"Yes, I found Him."

"Where?"

"Beyond Jordan, where John used to baptize."

"And did you tell Him that Lazarus was sick?"

"Yes, I told Him he was dangerously ill, that it was thought he wouldn't live."

"And what did He say?"

"He said the sickness wasn't unto death."

"Did He talk of coming?"

"He said, Yes, He would come."

"Did He come with you?"

"No, He went on preaching."

"Did He seem troubled?"

"No."

"Did He seem concerned?"

"No; He said the sickness wasn't unto death."

A strange look passed between those two sisters. Perhaps when they were alone Martha said to Mary:

"Can it be possible that we have been deceived in that preacher? If it had been Elijah or Elisha, he would have known that Lazarus was dead before the message got there; and yet He said the sickness wasn't unto death."

Still they watched and waited for JESUS to come. At night they listened for His footfall; but the fourth night rolled away, and the fifth morning dawned, and He had not come. How long the days were, how long the hours! It seemed as if the hours were as long as days. But, perhaps about four o'clock in the afternoon, as the sun was sinking behind those buildings in Jerusalem and throwing a shadow over the slope at Bethany, suddenly up out of the valley of the Jordan came CHRIST with His disciples. It may be that a little boy running into the house first told Martha, who was probably in the kitchen getting supper for the mourners who had come out from Jerusalem to weep with them, that CHRIST had come.

She didn't wait to call Mary, but rushed out and said as she met Him:

"If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died."

"Yes, but thy brother shall rise again."

"I know he will rise at the resurrection of the just, for he was such a good brother."

"I am the resurrection and the life."

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Then I imagine CHRIST looking around a little disappointed, as He said to Martha:

"Where is Mary? Go and call her."

Back into the house she went, and said to Mary:

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

Mary rises up, and as she meets JESUS, she says the very thing that Martha said, those ten words:

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

But she was weeping, and her tears seemed to touch the fountain of His own heart, and JESUS wept with her. Oh, how much comfort I get out of the fact that CHRIST can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and that CHRIST wept with those two sisters at Bethany!

When He asked where they had put the body, they showed Him the place, but with no thought that Lazarus was to rise. But He had power over death, and all He had to do was to speak, and His old friend Lazarus heard His voice and recognized it, and came up out of that sepulchre, and went back into his Bethany home. What a night that must have been! I have often tried to picture that home - Martha still serving, and Mary still listening - and oh, how she drank in the words that fell from His lips in that hour!

COMFORTING CHRIST

But now the scene changes. CHRIST had come to her in the time of trouble, to aid and to comfort. After that Mary came to CHRIST in the time of His trouble.

Take that thought home. Did you ever think that you could comfort CHRIST? We are always looking to CHRIST to comfort us, but there is a sense, I believe, in which each of us can comfort Him, if we will. Mary may not have received into her soul the thought that CHRIST was going to rise from the dead, but she had at least believed His word that He was going to die. If she had thought He was going to rise, I believe she would have been at the grave early on the third morning. No Roman soldier, no power on earth could have kept that loving heart away from that sepulchre. But she believed He was going to die, and so she took an alabaster box of ointment and broke it over Him.

TWO GIFTS WHICH JESUS COULD NOT GIVE AWAY

Did you ever think that there were only two gifts that were given to the SON of GOD when He was on earth that He could not give away? In the seventh chapter of Luke, we read of a poor woman who came with an alabaster box, and anointed Him with ointment, and here Mary also takes a box, and breaks it and pours out the precious ointment upon Him.

The disciples were indignant and found fault. The best things I have ever done since I became a Christian, I have been blamed for. People have found fault with me, and even the religious papers attack me for the best things that I have ever done. When I am dead and gone, people will acknowledge it. Oh, it is so hard when you are working for CHRIST to have His disciples indignant with you, and say bitter things!

When Mary broke that box and anointed JESUS, there was great indignation among the

disciples. Judas, that traitor, that was already planning to sell his Lord, was the most indignant of all. He was treasurer of the company. Mary thought he had great influence, and undoubtedly esteemed him more highly than herself. She thought she was the least of His disciples, but, thank GOD, love just overflowed, and she broke that box and anointed Him.

It was a great thing when Samuel anointed David, but no king ever had such a kingly anointing as when Mary anointed CHRIST with that ointment that was so sweet and so precious. One of the disciples figured up the price, and said that it was worth three hundred pence! A penny would hire a man all day, so that one pound of ointment had cost a year's work.

But JESUS estimated the worth differently. He rebuked the disciples, and said: "**Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me . . . For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.**"

Think of it! Wherever the Gospel of the Son of GOD is to be preached in this wide world, that story is to be told!

There is nothing lost that we do for CHRIST.

ANTE-MORIEM GIFTS

I can imagine that Mary thought that if she waited until JESUS was dead she might not have a chance to anoint His body, and so she came before His death to anoint Him.

There is a lesson there.

How very kind and thoughtful we are to a family that has lost some member, and what kind words are said after the person is dead and gone! Would it not be better to say a few of those good things before they go? Wouldn't it be well to give some of your bouquets before a man dies, and not go and load down his coffin? He can't enjoy them then.

It was beautiful for Mary to come in that hour when JESUS was going into the terrible darkness, and the shadow of the cross was already upon His path, and anoint Him for His burial. John says: "**Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.**"

"**The house was filled.**" Not only the house, but Jerusalem; not only Jerusalem, but Judea; not only Judea, but all Palestine; not only all Palestine, but, thank GOD, the whole world has been filled with that odor, and it has lost none of its fragrance yet. I believe that the sweet scent ascends to Heaven itself!

That was the best act that Mary ever did, and yet, if she had asked the twelve, everyone would have said: "No, it would be a waste. Take your money and give it to the poor."

Thank GOD, she forgot the poor for a while, she forgot His disciples, she forgot herself, and love just flowed out, and she lavished her best possession upon her Lord.

There is just one more passage that refers to this. It is in Mark: "**She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.**"

"**She hath done what she could!**" GOD does not ask any man or woman to do more than that, but if every man and every woman will do what they can, how much will be accomplished every day of our lives! An angel can't do no more than that.

It is said of Mrs. Comstock, that godly missionary to India, that she brought her children down to the steamer to send them back to this country. She couldn't educate them in India, so they were all to leave her and come back to America. She had never been separated from them one night since they were born.

The captain of the boat came and said, "Mrs. Comstock, I am sorry to tell you, but we are going to take up the gang-plank now. You must go ashore."

She fell on her knees and cried out, "Lord JESUS, I do this for Thee."

They say the best of history has never been written. It never has. That would be too small a thing for historians to notice, but do you tell me it wasn't noticed in Heaven? That mother was willing to give up her children and let them come back to this country, while she stayed there to work for CHRIST.

A MISSIONARY'S SON

A good many years ago I was stopping in a home in the West, and saw there a bright boy about thirteen years old. He didn't bear the name of the family he was living with, and yet was treated like one of the family. I asked the lady of the house who he was, and she said:

"He is the son of a missionary. His parents couldn't educate their children in India, so they came back here. But they had learned the language of India, and they did not feel that it was right for them to stay. Finally, the husband said, 'You stay here and educate the children, and I will go back.' The mother said, 'No. GOD has used me there with you, and we will go together.' 'But,' the father said, 'you can't give up those children. You never have been separated from them since they were born. You can't leave them in this country, and go back.' She said, 'I can do it for CHRIST, if He wants me to.'"

They made it a matter of prayer and put a notice in the papers that they were going to leave their children, and asking Christian people to take and educate them. This lady saw the notice, and wrote that she would take one child and bring it up for CHRIST's sake. She said:

"His mother came and stayed a week, and observed everything. She watched the order and discipline in my family, and after she was convinced that it was a safe place to leave her boy, she set the day to leave. My room was adjoining hers, and when the time came to start, I heard her pray, 'Lord JESUS, help me now. I need Thee. Help me to give up this dear boy without a tear,

that I may leave him with a smile. The last time he sees me I don't want him to see a tear in my eye. O GOD, help me, and give me strength."

Then she said that mother came down and took her boy to her bosom, hugged him and kissed him with a smile on her face - not a tear, - and left.

She went to five homes in the same way. She then returned to India, but only lived a year, and then went to meet her Lord and Master.

Some years afterwards I was preaching in Hartford, and found a young man who was in the habit of picking up the rough boys of the streets and bringing them to my meetings. He would sit with them around him, and after the sermon would try to lead those boys to CHRIST. It pleased me very much. and I asked who he was. They told me his name, and said that he was in the theological seminary. I found that he was one of those five sons, and all of them expected to return to India to take up the work that their father and mother had left.

There is no account of that in history, but it is known up in Heaven.

MARY IN HEAVEN

I imagine that there was no small stir when Mary of Bethany entered Heaven. She stands as high on the page of Christian history as any woman that ever lived; higher than Eve, or Sarah, the wife of Abraham, or Rebecca, or Rachel, or the whole lot of them.

I can see her coming up to the throne, and JESUS rises and says:

"Father, this is Mary that anointed Me for My burial."

I believe she did her work as faithfully as Paul did. When the books come to be opened, we will find some hidden one that we have never heard of has accomplished a greater work than many a man or woman whose name is known through the world.

Oh, that GOD would help us to forget ourselves and just work for Him directly! Never mind what people say. Never mind what the disciples say. They were indignant at Mary. CHRIST was pleased with her. Let us please Him.

Oh, I meet these Marys once in a while, and it is refreshing to my soul! There was one in Wellesley, some years ago. she was very anxious to graduate at Wellesley, but when her father died, she stepped right out and went to teaching school, and sent her two brothers to the academy and to college. She stayed out of Wellesley fifteen years until she landed those two boys in the pulpit, and then she went back and finished her course.

All honor to a woman that will do that!

MARY'S EPITAPH

I imagine when Mary died, if GOD had sent an angel to write her epitaph, he couldn't have done

better than to put over her grave what CHRIST said:

"She hath done what she could."

I would rather have that said over my grave, if it could honestly be said, than to have all the wealth of the Rothschilds. CHRIST raised a monument to her that is more lasting than the monuments raised to Caesar or Napoleon. Their monuments crumble away, but hers endures. Her name never appeared in print while she was on earth, but to-day it is famous in three hundred and fifty languages.

We may never be great; we may never be known outside our circle of friends; but we may, like Mary, do what we can. May GOD help each one of us to do what we can! Life will soon be over; it is short at the longest. Let us rise and follow in the footsteps of Mary of Bethany.

~ end of chapter 6 ~
