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“ BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.”

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE CHAPEL

OF

KEBLE COLLEGE,

ON

S. MARK'S DAY,

1876.

BY THE

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SOLD BY

JAMES PARKER AND CO., OXFORD,

AND 377, STRAND, LONDON;

RIVINGTONS,

LONDON, OXFORD, AND CAMBRIDGE;

AND POTT, YOUNG & CO., NEW YORK.

1876.

PRINTED BY THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY TRINITY,  
HOLY ROOD, OXFORD.

## “BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.”

S. MATT. V. 5.

*“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”*

THE Beatitudes stand in the forefront of the Gospel, as a sort of proclamation, what must be the minds of those, who would be, themselves, followers of Jesus Christ, good soldiers in *His* army, which was to prevail by the Blood of the Lamb and, through the merits of that one meritorious Sacrifice, their own self-sacrifice, until the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. This their purpose was not explained then. But thus much lay upon the surface, that when the multitudes came around, Jesus went up into a mountain and pronounced these blessings, as a prelude to His fuller teaching. He seems to say, by the place which He assigns to them, “Of such as these, and these only, is My kingdom: this is the alphabet to be learned by My disciples: whoso learneth not these first precepts will be turned back by others, with which he will meet hereafter: look well at them, acknowledge them, as at least to be worked into your souls hereafter, and so, follow Me.”

Plainly the very union of them implies thus much, that no one is complete in itself. No one could or would fulfil the one, who had not learned others also.

To mention two, not on the surface connected, the merciful and the pure in heart, how many in the world's estimation seem to be merciful, to a certain degree, i. e. to have pity on the poor, to do generous actions, who yet do not profess to be pure in heart! Yet Nathan's parable, which brought repentance to David, shews how intensely selfish impurity becomes. All those who suffer by man's sins, of which they become the accomplices, were some one's "little ewe-lambs" once: any how they were Christ's lambs, washed by His Blood, sealed by His mark, received into His Bosom.

But also there is this common to all, that they all imply some degree of self-denial, self-sacrifice or temporal hardness, willingly endured for the sake of God. Of some this is expressed, as of those in whom the blessings culminate, those who are "persecuted for righteousness sake," and, "when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." But "mourning" too is from some outward or inward sorrow, although this issues in the cry of the soul to God: rarely would it, unoccasioned by ought besides, be solely from the soul's missing its seemingly absent God. Hunger and thirst after righteousness are the burning disquiet of the soul, through the body of death in which it is imprisoned, and for its unlikeness to its God. The histories of saints attest with what hardness and self-discipline purity of soul is, by the grace of God, maintained: the history of sinners, how incompatible it is with self-indulgence or fullness of bread. Mercifulness, in its very name, implies a fellow-suffering. Compassion, sympathy, mitleid,

mark by their very names that there is no true fellow-feeling, unless we ourselves, in our degree, suffer with those who suffer. Of involuntary poverty there can be no question; all by nature shrink from it, as involving privation, hardship, scarcity of things pleasant, bodily sufferings; and yet, well-used, it must be blessed, since it was the lot which our Lord chose for Himself and His Apostles. Poverty of spirit also cannot be obtained but by much mental privation, cutting off occasions of self-display, curbing its own spirit, checking all self-elation, whether from within or from worldly prosperity or popular favour, immersing itself evermore in the abyss of its own nothingness, and knowing itself to be nothing (not saying it only,) and God to be all.

So lastly, as to this Beatitude "Blessed are the meek." Meekness is not easiness of disposition, even if "not," by nature, "easily provoked:" it is not sweetness of temper, beautiful as this is. It is not kindness, nor gentleness, nor kind-heartedness. These are, or may be, beautiful natural gifts of God. It is a grace formed by suffering; as, in the language moulded by the Spirit of God, afflicted, suffering, meek, humble, are scarcely distinguishable<sup>a</sup>; a prosperous man in this world would not ordinarily have these graces specially called out, and so, in the Old Testament, in which God drew His servants more, as little children, by temporal rewards, the mention of meekness is rare, and those who are so called are mostly implied to have been in suffering<sup>b</sup>; as one

<sup>a</sup> מַעֲבֹרִים, one afflicted and meek; מַעֲבֹרִים, one meek, but mostly afflicted.

<sup>b</sup> The singular מַעֲבֹרִים "meek" only occurs Nu. xii. 3, of Moses; the meek (plur.) are implied to be in trouble. Ps. ix. 13. x. 12.

would not call one "patient," who had nothing to endure. It is, we know, "*one who suffers.*"

So, beautiful and joyous as this our redeemed world is, because it is engoldened with light from above, suffering is stamped upon it, as the condition of God-given excellence. So was each pattern of meekness in the Old Testament formed. How fiery was Moses, when he thought that his brethren would have understood by his slaying the Egyptian, how that God by his hand would deliver them<sup>c</sup>! And God sent him into the wilderness and tamed him for those forty years, with no employment that we know of, but to tend the flock of his father-in-law: to long, it may be, for the redemption of his people and to hold converse with his God, until, when he had reached the utmost limit of man's usual term of life, God sent him, armed with His own might but with his shepherd's crook only for his weapon. When he said, in consciousness of his own powerlessness, "d Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" then was he a fitting instrument in the Hands of Him Who useth the "e weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Yet not even so, nor until he had endured the continued contradiction and ingratitude of God's people, ever

(and so, 16) xxxiv. 3, lxix. 33, lxxvi. 10, cxlvii. 6, Pr. xiv. 21, Isa. xi. 4, lxi. 1. Suffering is mentioned in the context Ps. xxii. 27; they are united with the poor, Isa. xxix. 19. Am. ii. 7. There is no mention of suffering, Ps. xxv. 9, xxxvii. 11, cxlix. 4. Pr. iii. 34. xvi. 19, though here contrasted with wealth. "Meekness" (subst.) is only mentioned Ps. xv. 33. xviii. 12. xxii. 4. Zeph. iii. 3. as an attribute of the Messiah, Ps. xlv. 4. and of God Ps. xvii. 36.

<sup>c</sup> Acts vii. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Exod. iii. 11.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. i. 27.

hardening their hearts at each fresh trial, reproaching him for their deliverance, almost ready to stone him<sup>f</sup>, ready to be worn out by his daily toil for them, interceding with God again and again for them, did he come to be entitled “<sup>g</sup> very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” and then God declared unto him that He would speak with “<sup>h</sup> him mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.”

How does the Apostle, who had learned the blessedness of endurance (“<sup>i</sup> we count them happy which endure,” as if it were the received maxim and practice of Christians) how does he burst out in admiration at the patience of Job, as an ensample to us, “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord;” how He requited him. “<sup>k</sup> Blessed,” says a father, “was Job, while he lived righteously in riches; but more blessed, when he was more righteous in poverty. Blessed was he, when surrounded by ten sons; more blessed, when, stricken at once with fatherlessness of all, he remained immoveable in the love of God. Blessed was he in soundness of body, more blessed was he made by its sores; more blessed too amid the ashes, than in the palace inlaid with marble.”

How meek was David, when his humility moved even Saul who was seeking his life<sup>l</sup>: “After whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea?” or again in the humility of his penitence, when he

<sup>f</sup> Exod. xvii. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Num. xii. 3.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. 8.

<sup>i</sup> S. James v. 11.

<sup>k</sup> S. Fulg. Ep. ii. 9. ad Gall. Bibl. P. ix. 88.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Sam. xxiv. 1-15. xxvi. 18-23.

said to those who would avenge him, "Let him curse, since God hath said unto him, Curse David." One brief hour of self-exaltation and self-confidence brought those terrible sins, which have been an occasion for blasphemies to this day, that God so forgave and so loved one who had so sinned, but who, save in that one dreadful fall, so loved Him and so repented.

What should one say of that great cloud of witnesses, unknown to man but known to God, the saints and martyrs of the Old Testament, types beforehand of our Lord, who had <sup>m</sup> trials of mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment, who were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, wandering in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented?

And when He, the long-expected, was to come, He to "Whom the obedience of the nations" was to be, He, in Whom "all the families of the earth were to be blessed;" He, Who should crush the head of the Enemy of our race; He, through Whom the law was to "go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," "Who should judge among many people and judge strong nations afar off," in what guise was He to come? We know the Gospel written in the prophets. As one "Whom man despiseth, He Whom the nation abhorreth, He, the servant of rulers," Who "gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," Who "hid not His Face from shame and spitting," "despised and rejected of men, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," oppressed and willingly enduring it, yet,

<sup>m</sup> Heb. xi. 36, 37.

withal "brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." He should come a king, but in no kingly guise; lowly and riding on an ass; kings should arise and worship, because He was despised: He should justify many, because He should bear their iniquities; He should divide the spoil, "because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors."

And when He came to save us, how was He received? The Beloved disciple sums it up: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Until the hour came to fulfil His mission, He increased in favour with man, as with God<sup>n</sup>. But then! S. Paul, even after having spoken of those Sufferings of the Cross, singles out as the chief, "Behold Him, Who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Those Sufferings were to Him, what we cannot imagine. For He only knew the depths of endless misery, from which He came to save them; and they, in their contradiction, refused to be saved. He only knew that portion of endless bliss, in which He would have placed each of them; and they, one by one, would not. He Alone knew the Infinite depth of that holiness, against which they blasphemed. He only, in His Infinite love, could feel, what a wound it was to that love. Conceive yourself, with charred hands, labouring to rescue a tender child from the fire which would con-

<sup>n</sup> S. Luke ii. 52.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. xii. 3.

sume her, and her even passionately putting aside the hand which would rescue her, and turning the more to it. And yet this was the whole of His ministry! The more He would do for them, the more they turned against Him. Holy Scripture gives some few instances of it; but, at the last, when the Chief Priests and all the Council sought for false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, “<sup>p</sup> many,” we are told, “bare false witness against Him; but their witness agreed not together.” God did not will that Holy Scripture should be occupied with the false witnesses which they then bare. It mentions only one thing, which they alleged, which so far was nearly true. They alleged that they themselves heard Him say it; yet they alleged it wrongly, for they say, “we heard Him say, I will destroy,” whereas He said “Destroy;” which, of course, they would not do as to their material temple. Yet even so their inferences were untrue: “neither so did their witness agree together.” Yet they would have Him answer their false-witness, hoping even thus to extract something which they might distort against Him. How they watched Him and sent forth spies, which might feign themselves just men<sup>q</sup>, that they might take hold of His words! And when He, Who shall be Judge of quick and dead, was before His earthly judge, they poured out what they thought that they had gathered. Yet even thus “their witness agreed not together.” Him Whose meat it was to do the will of Him Who sent Him, they called “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber:” Him Who was the Truth and of Whom they bare witness, “<sup>r</sup> We

know that Thou art True and teachest the way of God in Truth" they called "s that deceiver;" "t He deceiveth the people." Him Who came to destroy the works of the devil, they called by the name of that blasted spirit, "Beelzebub." "u Thou hast a devil." "v Say we not well, that Thou hast a devil?" "Now we know that Thou hast a devil." "He hath a devil and is mad. Why hear ye Him?" It would be too shocking, if Holy Scripture had embodied all the coarse things which the infuriated crowd said; but we can imagine them in some degree, from the things in which a rough modern crowd would vent itself against any object of their displeasure. They blindfolded Him and struck Him on the Face and asked Him, "w Prophesy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?" As if they would say, "Aha! Aha! now we have brought Thy claims to be a prophet to the test, and Thou canst not vindicate Thyself;" and the coarse jeers ring in our ears, as they afterwards challenged Him and mocked Him, "x If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him." And Jesus kept that Divine silence, and only answered their "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," with "Father, forgive them y."

Was the disciple to be "above his Master, or the servant above his Lord?" "z It is enough," our Lord says, "for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his

s S. Matt. xxvii. 63.

t S. John vii. 12.

u Ib. 20.

v Ib. viii. 48, 52. x. 20.

w S. Luke xxii. 64. S. Matt. xxvi. 68.

x S. Matt. xxvii. 42.

y S. Luke xxiii. 34.

z S. Matt. x. 25.

household!" How do the Apostles describe their calling? S. Paul speaks in the name of them all. "a God hath set forth us, the Apostles, last, as a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men." And what was this drama, which was to be beheld, to fix the minds of men and angels? Suffering and revilings, endured patiently. "We," he says, "are accounted fools for Christ: weak, despised; to this hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and buffeted and have no certain dwelling-place: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the earth, the offscouring of all things unto this day." And another Apostle speaks of it, as a matter of course, an every day thing, "b whereas they speak of you as evil doers." And the Jews at Rome knew nothing of them, but that "c as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."

So it continued to be. No charge was too absurd to be believed. They, the purity of whose lives was attested by the heathen<sup>d</sup>, were persecuted for incests in their public worship; they who abstained from such use of blood as remained in things strangled, were believed in their worship to eat infants<sup>e</sup>. A Christian they accounted "an enemy of the gods, of the emperors, of the law, of morals, of all nature;" yet dreaded to enquire, lest they should find the accusations false. "Folly, vanity, old wives' fables, puerile phrenzies," and the like, were the common heathen

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 9—14.

<sup>b</sup> 1 S. Pet. ii. 12. iii. 16.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxviii. 22.

<sup>d</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 50 and n. z p. 105;

c. 9, p. 24 and n. f. Oxf. Tr.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. c. 2. p. 4, 5. and others

p. 5. n. q.

<sup>f</sup> Id. de test. an. n. s.

mockery. But “<sup>g</sup> the foolishness of God ” proved “ wiser than men and the weakness of God was stronger than men.” As individuals were won to the Gospel by the observed meekness of their fellow-travellers <sup>h</sup>, so was the world won by the sufferings of Christians. So was our Lord’s prophecy fulfilled, “ the meek shall inherit the earth.” “ Shall inherit it.” It was not theirs; they gat it not through might of their own, but as His Inheritance, to Whom they belonged, Whose they were, Whose lowliness they followed, Who suffered in them, Who spake by them, Who crowned them and was crowned in them, to Whom it had been said, “ I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.” “ Inasmuch as they had been taught not to resist,” says an early Apologist<sup>i</sup>, “ they kept this gentle and loving law; therefore they accomplished what they had not, had they, mighty as they were, received permission to war.” “ <sup>k</sup>The Church, shivering the assaults of the Pagans, was more and more strengthened, not by resisting, but by enduring.” “ <sup>l</sup>That very obstinacy, with which ye upbraid us, is the teacher. For who is not stirred up by the contemplation of it to enquire, what there is in the core of the matter? Who, when he hath enquired, doth not join us? Who, when he hath joined us, doth not long to suffer ? ”

The condition of the victory of the Gospel, in the appointment of God, was three centuries of meek and patient suffering. It was not for want of strength.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. i. 25.      <sup>h</sup> S. Justin M. Apol. i. 16. p. 12. Oxf. Tr.

<sup>i</sup> Orig. c. Cels. iii. 8. p. 452 de la Rue.

<sup>k</sup> S. Aug. de Ag. Christ. c. 12.

<sup>l</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 50.

“<sup>m</sup>We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province will be greater. For what war should we not be sufficient and ready, even though unequal in number, who so willingly are put to death, if it were not, in this religion of ours, more lawful to be slain than to slay?” But so had God foretold, “<sup>n</sup>Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” And so God spread them, through suffering, within and without the Roman empire. The king of Parthia was the conquest of the Gospel earlier than Constantine. It ran like lightning from Britain to India; but its conquests every where were through its own blood, or, since they belonged to Jesus, in a manner anew the blood of Jesus, since the Apostle says, “<sup>o</sup>we are members of His Body, of His Flesh and of His bones.” It has survived all empires; it is not confined like the Buddhist atheism or the Brahmin pantheism, however numerous their adherents, to single, however large, localities; it is still prevailing; and the only religion, which propagates like it, is a heresy from it; which learned what it has of truth from an apostate monk, and a Jewish renegade. It wins from all; it loses to none.

Hindered though we be through our sad divisions, to the heathen we seem but one, who worship One God, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, and have one hope of salvation in One Who took our nature upon Him, Perfect God and yet Perfect Man. East, West, North and South, the compass of our Redeemer’s kingdom is enlarged, as was said of old

<sup>m</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 37. p. 78. Oxf. Tr.

<sup>n</sup> Zech. iv. 6.

<sup>o</sup> Eph. v. 30.

to the promised king; “<sup>p</sup>The people shall be subdued unto Thee, even in the midst of the king’s enemies. Instead of thy fathers, thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands.”

“For they the Church’s princes are,  
Triumphant leaders in the war,  
In heavenly courts a warrior band,  
True lights to lighten every land.”

Why have I chosen this Beatitude for our thoughts this morning? To speak briefly, because, although it is the grace which our Lord especially commanded to us, it is, I fear, of all the rarest; because it was eminently possessed by him, in memory of the gift of whom to us, on this day <sup>q</sup>, this day has been chosen for the dedication of this magnificent Chapel; then, because it is specially needed now, has now too a greater promise, and yet is most opposite to every natural temper of the day.

Is it not rare? Notwithstanding this reign of corruption, many, I trust, have by the grace of God been kept pure in heart. Amid this tyranny of self-indulgence, we cannot but marvel at the grace of God, which so makes the religious poor accept, as a matter of course, the suffering so predominant among them, from which we should so shrink. Real repentance is no longer hindered by that speedy self-forgiveness, which dismissed past sin, without a pang, because it was past; some mourn abidingly the sin which aggravated the Sufferings of Jesus, Who died to save them “from its guilt and power,” and Who

<sup>p</sup> Ps. xlv. 6, 17.

<sup>q</sup> John Keble was born on S. Mark’s Day, 1792.

felt sharply the ingratitude which would despise in themselves the price of His Blood. Amid this yoke of luxury, there are, I trust, many merciful, though most among those who have the least; and “<sup>r</sup>rich men furnished with ability” (like the giver of this glorious Chapel) who are not put to shame by that elder people of God, who knew not as yet the love of Christ, are, I fear, very rare. The fomenters of quarrels are, I fear, more frequent than the peacemakers. Yet these too even abound, at least through our natural national kindness. Zeal there is for God, in a manner, although it seems just now, alas, that it shews itself more in hostility to one another, than in striving to win, one the other, to the truth as it is in Jesus.

But meekness, where is it? I fear that most would find it difficult to form a picture to themselves, what it is, or wherein it consists. We can see, thanks be to God, persons devoted, generous, kindhearted, forgivers of injuries; some, self-sacrificing; many doing, one trusts, the work which God giveth them to do, for His sake, diligent in their callings; tenderhearted to those who suffer; but, looking at the surface only, how people take affronts, contradictions, contempt,—meekness certainly does not seem the grace which people specially cultivate, or even think about.

Yet, together with that all-comprehensive grace of self-denying charity, charity formed on the model of His sacrifice of Himself for love of us His rebel creatures, meekness and humility are the graces which He himself set forth as to be learned of Him.

He is the pattern, of course, as well as the source of every grace. It may be, that a former generation may have spoken somewhat coldly about our Divine Master as our Pattern, not dwelling proportionately upon Him, as our Redeemer. Still there was a loyalty about that devotion, which we may well wish back again. For it must needs have its Saviour ever before its eyes: it could not but have a personal individual love for *Him*, Whom it was ever beholding: Whose ineffable grace it was ever seeking to transfuse into itself; Who was the inseparable Companion of its life. How must they have looked to Jesus, to whom the life of Christ was the rule of life<sup>r</sup>; who beheld portrayed in Him all true piety and virtue, which, as God should enable them, they were to copy! Conceive yourself for a single day, steadily, in all things, asking yourself, "How would Christ act, how should I act, so as to be most like unto Christ?"

But of all those graces, what He has Himself set specially before us as to be learned of Him are, that new Commandment, "love one another, as I have loved you," with a self-sacrificing, self-denying love, and that of meekness and lowliness. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart." "Learn of Me," says a father<sup>s</sup>, "not to frame a world, not to create all things visible and invisible, not, in this same world to do wonderful things and raise the dead, but 'because I am meek and lowly of heart.' Wouldest thou be great, begin from the least. Thinkest thou to construct a great

<sup>r</sup> S. Bern. ad mil. templi c. 11.

<sup>s</sup> S. Aug. Serm. lxxix. Ben. [xix. p. 160 Oxf. Tr.]

and lofty building, first think of the foundation of humility.”

But this again is no common meekness nor lowliness; no meekness, which human nature, unengraced, could simulate; no soft natural temperament, no sweetness of soul, however beautiful, no forbearance, out of mere regard to what is seemly; but meekness, learned from Himself, inwrought by His Spirit through continued study of His Divine meekness, the daughter of humility, the mother of patience. It pervades the whole of life. Look at it, as His Apostles taught it, who had learned of Him, who spake by His Spirit. They name it as an essential fruit of the Spirit<sup>†</sup>. Where it is altogether wanting, there the Spirit of Christ is not, or is well-nigh stifled: it and some sister-graces are singled out as essential to our walking “worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, as the elect of God, holy and beloved<sup>‡</sup>: it included “speaking evil of no man, not of the heathen magistrates who persecuted them to the death, and that, in memory of what *we* (S. Paul includes himself) had once been. It is alike essential to receiving and imparting truth or removing error. To the reception of truth is required not only the removal of defilement and of exuberance of wickedness, but meekness. Through this alone can we receive or retain in living faith the Word of God, engrafted in our hearts by the Spirit of God to the salvation of our souls<sup>§</sup>. If we would impart ought to others, it suffices not that we have wisdom and knowledge, and ourselves practise what we know,

<sup>†</sup> Gal. v. 23.

<sup>‡</sup> Tit. iii. 1-3.

<sup>§</sup> Eph. iv. 1, 2.

<sup>¶</sup> Col. iii. 12.

<sup>∞</sup> S. James i. 21.

unless we speak "in meekness of wisdom<sup>y</sup>." This was their law toward their heathen persecutors, (would we had more of it in these days of controversy) "z be not ye troubled; but be ready to give to every one that asketh you, an account of the faith which is in you," not by arguing which convinces no one and provokes but nausea<sup>a</sup>; but by confessing "in meekness and fear." This especially belongs to us the Clergy and all who hope to become such, "b to be meek towards all men," without exception, be they what they may, revile us how they may, "enduring with meekness" those who set themselves against the truth. This is the condition of reproof even of open fault, "c instruct such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted," and fall into the very sin which, forgetful of human frailty, thou rebukest.

And for this we are to set Christ ever before us. "Learn of Me." For who could care to be thought well of, when his Lord was called "Beelzebub?" Who could regard human opinion, if he thought of his Lord being called "that deceiver?" Who could heed being counted a fool, if he remembered his Lord's demeanour, when they said, "He is beside Himself?"

Nor need we only have before our eyes all those horrors of the Passion. Every grace, every beauty, has its likeness in God, and in Him Who, being God, was also Man, and is Unchangeably what He was. What meekness can He have now, Who does not come visibly face to face with contempt? One

<sup>y</sup> S. James iii. 13.    <sup>z</sup> 1 S. Pet. iii. 15.    <sup>a</sup> Tert. de Præscript. c. 17.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. add 1 Tim. vi. 11.    <sup>c</sup> Gal. vi. 1.

ground of meekness He has not, Who had no sin. But meekness we should conceive of, as "loving undisturbed forbearance, motionless, unprovoked amidst any provocation or contempt, serene deep like the blue sky above us." And is He the less despised because we do not see Him? Is He less blasphemed, because we do not hear the blasphemies pierce His ears? Is it no contempt for one to count "the Blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace?" And have we not alas! manifoldly provoked Him? Has He not borne patiently and lovingly with all our waywardnesses? Has He been wearied with our manifold contradictions and ingratitude? Surely He preaches meekness to us from His throne of glory, where He was interceding for each one of us, while we were offending Him.

But how then is this lowliness of soul, this self-abjection, this sense of one's own nothingness, compatible with that greatness of soul, which the heathen rightly admired, with those aspirations after what is high and great and noble, or with those natural energies which God has implanted in us; those indistinct desires, it may be, but still, strong yearnings to do something more than such around us as live useless lives, centered all in self; with those high aims and earnest longings which God Himself gives? How, I would ask in turn, are the foundations of this beautiful building reared to the glory of God, but themselves sunk deep, unseen, unhonoured, in the earth, buried, so as never again to be beheld by man's eye, compatible with this high

glorious canopy, arched, as the orb of the heavens above us, themselves the footstool of the heaven of heavens? Simply, because it is one; and without that deep foundation the building could not stand. The loose and sandy earth has been cast out, and so the building rests on a sure foundation, as the spiritual building, whether the Church or the single soul, all of earth being cast out, rests on the one Foundation, which is Christ. Unless our fabric were sunk deep, so as to reach Him, rest solely on Him, it would, we know, rest upon the sand, and great would be the fall thereof!

So has it been as to every one whom God has employed. Isaiah, when the King, the Lord of Hosts, revealed Himself to the eyes of his soul, cried, “<sup>e</sup>Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” When the burning coal, the symbol of the Incarnation and the lowliness of Jesus, which he had to proclaim, had touched his lips, and he was told, “thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged,” he answered to God’s call, “Who will go for us?—not “I will go,” but “here am I; send me.” He knew himself insufficient of himself; but if sent by God, he could, through God, do all for which God should send him. This was the confession which David made for all Israel, “<sup>f</sup>Through God shall we do great acts.” “<sup>g</sup>They gat not the land in possession by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that helped them; but Thy right hand and Thine arm, because Thou hadst a favour unto them.”

Jeremiah shrank from the office to which God

<sup>e</sup> Is. vi. 5-9.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. lx. 12.

<sup>g</sup> Ib. xliv. 3.

called him, saying “<sup>h</sup>I am but a youth,” but when God had touched his lips, he no more excused himself, for God had said, “I am with thee.”

“By the grace of God,” S. Paul says<sup>i</sup>, “I am what I am; and His grace in me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all;” “yet not I,” he adds quickly, “but the grace of God which was with me.” “<sup>j</sup>I can do all things through Christ instrengthening me.” He could do great acts; for he knew that it was Christ forecoming him; that he might have a good will; accompanying him, that he might bring it into effect; perfecting him, that he might be found perfect in Him. He was but the earthen vessel, in which God poured the riches of His grace; only that God gave him the glorious power, through his enfreed will, to work together with Him. How gloriously did the light flash forth, when the earthen vessel was broken and gone,

“As through the clouds riven  
The lightnings have shone.”

All was *from* God, but it was *through* man.

Think not that, when speaking of meekness, I am going to be a “*laudator temporis acti me*” juvenc, if, in one respect, I contrast the times of the beginning of this great movement in which we live, with the present. For I was least of all, and if God vouchsafed to let me be one drop in the mighty tide, it was that whatever God, I hoped, gave me to do, I did it with all my might. He, I hope, did it through me. But I think that he, whom we to-day commemorate, cast the cooling shadow of his lowliness

<sup>h</sup> Jer. i. 6.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.

<sup>j</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

over all. Nearly fifty years ago appeared, at a father's wish and against his own, an anonymous volume, unpretending, reflective, unimpassioned; (he describes it, "without poetical depth and fervour"); people called it obscure; his only dread was lest it should be identified with himself and occasion others to think too well of him. Of himself, he never spoke<sup>k</sup> or alluded to it; I should doubt, if he remembered it. If others spoke of it, his only title for it was "that book." Yet "that book" was, after the Bible and Prayer-book, the book which renewed, through God's Spirit, the devotional life in this our Church.

It gushed forth from the heart, and it spake to the heart. They were his own devotional musings on eternal things. It was not directly in dogmatic form: it presupposed the faith, which he loved more than life. But it taught, because his own soul was moved so deeply; the stream burst forth, because the heart which poured it out, was full; it was fresh, deep, tender, loving, because himself was such: it disclosed to souls secrets which they knew not, but could not fail to own when known, because he was so true and thought aloud; and conscience every where responded to the voice of conscience. In two or three respects he outgrew it, as his deepened acquaintance with the early Christian writers taught him; but he altered nothing, because he had discarded it from himself. Once only, near the close

<sup>k</sup> "Sometimes the poem for the day in the Christian Year was read aloud, *if the writer chanced to be absent*; for in *that* house, *that* book could not be openly produced as elsewhere, so sensitive was Mr. Keble about it." Recollections of Hursley Vicarage. Monthly Packet xlii. 562.

of life, when one in high station alleged it, as contradicting the faith which he held, he, as his last legacy to the Church, regardless of the context and all besides, directed the well-known change to be made, asserting the truth which he believed, as emphatically as he could—"as in the hands" for the misinterpreted "not in the hands." It gave offence, because the contradiction of the misinterpretation was so emphatic: but he himself was then withdrawn from "the strife of tongues."

One office, other than that in which he passed his life, he would have accepted, had minds been one,—to be the guide of the young, in a body such as you are, although smaller<sup>1</sup>. "I should not," he said to me, "have shrunk from it, as from a Bishopric." Unhappily some of us who loved him, did not know the power of his deep sympathy with the young heart, and thought another more practical. He could not bear division, so withdrew. The whole of the later history of our Church might have been changed, had we been wiser; but God, through our ignorance, withdrew him, and it must have been well with him, since God so overruled it. To us it became a sorrow of our lives.

He shrank from the issue of the Christian Year, because it implied the conviction that the Church was (as it then was) "in a state of decay;" yet he did not speak as men now do, but, with Daniel, confessed our common sin. "While I was speaking," says Daniel, "and praying and confessing *my sins* and the sins of my people Israel and presenting my sup-

<sup>1</sup> The Provostship of Oriel. See Coleridge's *Life of J. K.* pp. 176-181.

plication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God." Day by day, winter and summer, he rose before dawn, to pray for the Church "in her distress:" but not one word against our fathers the Bishops, whose authority we essayed to uphold among those who thought lightly of it. They had mostly been educated in other ways, and we could not make them understand our object, to bring back the children of the Church to the fulness of that faith which our Church had inherited from the fathers. They excepted against details, and gave no encouragement or guidance which we could follow. But there was not one word of disrespect. We explained as we could, removed objections, taught in language, which could least be misunderstood. On one only<sup>m</sup> besides, whom we loved and love, but of whom it is not my office to speak to-day, it fell with accumulated weight. Most of us it touched not individually. But he, for sixteen years, up to his sixty-fifth year, remained the sole priest in his scattered parish, because his Bishop would not accept the explanation of the doctrine of "the Real Presence," such as we all hold, from his deacon Curate<sup>n</sup>. He exposed himself, by night, in ministering to his poor, when

<sup>m</sup> J. H. Newman. On the precipitate condemnation of Tract xc by the Hebdomadal Board, see Coleridge's *Life of Keble* pp. 270-280 ed. 2. and my revised Preface to Tract xc. 1866. Unhappily 12 English Bishops (including alas! his own Bishop who was to him *instar omnium*) three Irish, one East Indian, echoed, more or less, the hasty and ignorant condemnation by the Hebdomadal Board. The only Bishop who understood us, alone never censured us, Abp. Howley.

<sup>n</sup> The Curate said, among other things, "The Church of England does not define the mode" [of the Presence], "neither do I."

such exposure was dangerous<sup>o</sup>. Yet by virtue of the high office of his Bishop he only thought and spoke to his people of the presence of the Bishop among them at a Confirmation, as the representative of Christ, an Angel of God, as Christ Jesus<sup>p</sup>.

For years (as has been beautifully said) “<sup>q</sup>The true and primary author of the movement was, as is usual with great motive powers, out of sight.”

One word more as to the modesty of his work. “What think you,” he said<sup>r</sup>, “of a kind of association as *quiet and unpretending as may be*, if possible even without a name, for the circulation of primitive notions concerning the Apostolic succession and the protection of the Prayer-book against profane innovation?” These were the first notes of a trumpet-call, at whose voice armed men started up every where from what seemed a barren and dry ground, to do battle for the truths of God. The faith was not dead, though it seemed to be sleeping.

But above all he lived. The Passion of his Lord, Whom he loved, was his book, his life. He lived, because Christ lived in him. He was all prayer at all times, although those only who narrowly observed him, saw it, and he knew not that it was observed; else he would have hid it. It was his principle, “<sup>s</sup>amid all our cheerful conversation, yea our mirth, we must keep deep down in our heart a flow of seri-

<sup>o</sup> Coleridge’s *Life of Keble* p. 430.

<sup>p</sup> Keble’s *Sermons for the Christian Year* (Easter) Vol. v. pp. 188, 189. (Ascension—Trinity Sunday) Vol. vi. p. 130.

<sup>q</sup> Newman’s *Apologia* p. 75.

<sup>r</sup> A Letter in 1833 in Coleridge’s life pp. 219, 220 ed. 2.

<sup>s</sup> His own words in *Monthly Packet*, xlii. 556.

ous earnest thought;" and that thought was of Christ and of souls.

His "humbling humility" has been even startling<sup>n</sup>, inexplicable. The sun's strong light, streaming into our dwellings, shews us the specks of dust unseen before. It belongs to saints, to believe themselves last of all. He talked no controversy, but he lived; and doubting minds were impressed by him, and said, "God is in us of a truth."

Since our Lord says, "The meek shall inherit the earth," one sees why his inheritance, or rather that of his Master in him and through him, has been increasing even to this day; why even his departure from us has still enlarged it, and will, we trust, through this memorial of him, yet further enlarge it, carrying on the work of his life; and why some who have succeeded him must become other than outwardly they seem to be, if they are to inherit it. For full ten years or more, the elder of us have mourned the temper of those organs, which professed to speak our mind. Evil-speaking, mockery, sarcasm, lampooning, harsh censure, are not part of the armoury of God, nor "fruits of the Spirit." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." But in all evil speaking, the listener is the accomplice of the evil-speaker. Men would not speak evil, unless they knew it to be acceptable to those to whom they spoke. Such speaking, from persons believing the Episcopate to have been instituted by God, is of course absolutely inconsistent, and certainly can

<sup>t</sup> Mr. Tyacke's letter in Coleridge's life p. 502.

<sup>u</sup> As, to his friend Sir J. T. Coleridge, probably from want of acquaintance with the language of saints. Life pp. 294-296.

claim no blessing from Him. Yet if I might say so much, I would hope that loyal servants of Christ and of the Church will not any more be stamped as disobedient to law, because we do not obey the last of contradictory misinterpretations of law, which moreover it would be inexpedient for Bishops themselves to obey; remembering the grave saying of an early Christian apologist; “<sup>v</sup> No law ought to satisfy itself merely of its own justice, but those also from whom it expecteth obedience. But the law is suspicious, if it will not have itself proved, and reprobate if, unapproved, it domineereth.”

On the other hand, I trust that we shall not, on our side, be guilty of the injustice done to most of our fathers-in-God, as having endured this new law; since, whatever else its faults, it enables them to be protectors instead of being mere judges of their accused Clergy; judges also, powerless, on account of appeals, really to acquit them; whereas they may now, and I trust they will, finally stop vexatious proceedings, where the Clergy and the people are of one mind in the worship of God.

What times are coming upon the earth, He only knows, in Whose Hand are the hearts of men, and the times and seasons, in which He shall accomplish His work upon earth, and shall fill up the number of the saved. It so belongs to a Christian to long for His Coming, that those who love Him have often expected it, and yet the tokens vanished. Now again there are more than usual signs of some great impending strife between good and evil, such as has not been for many generations; but whether the last or no, He

<sup>v</sup> Tertullian Apol. n. 4. p. 12. Oxf. Tr.

only knows, Whose Coming will end it. Human plans are on a gigantic scale. Satan seems to be marshalling his hosts for the battle, while he deludes people into the persuasion that he himself exists not. All middle forms of unbelief seem to be disappearing: all the gods which men made, and called them "the deity" or "the first cause," are seen to be the phantoms, which they ever were: one only choice is left, God as He has revealed Himself, or an abyss of nothingness.

In this strife, my sons, you will, you must each have your part, and, I trust, a glorious part, ending in that glory, to which our Lord will call His faithful servants; that glorious throne, for which God created each one of you and which He has created for you; that special place around the eternal Throne which, in all eternity, He had in His mind for each; your very own place, belonging to you (unless you wilfully forfeit it), which He purchased for you with His own Precious Blood; and which is vacant still for you, until He have perfected you in obedience, humility and love.

You have come here, to be developed in all the powers of mind and body, not in any stiff or constrained or narrow way, but in largeness of heart; you have come, to cultivate your powers, as he, whose name and memory is your founder, did; who, when but twenty<sup>w</sup>, had gained all the higher honours here, and in whose clear brilliant penetrating eye, after above fifty years of toil, and, of late, of heart- and strength-consuming anxiety for souls and for the

<sup>w</sup> His two first classes and the fellowship at Oriel were gained before he was 19; the two B. A. essays, before he was 20.

Church, that intellect shone unto the end; and “<sup>x</sup>the seraph’s fire that burned within, flung its glory over eye and lip and brow.” But more. You have come to this school of faith, in contrast with the world’s faithlessness; you have come to this school of simplicity, in contrast with the world’s ever-degenerating, heartless, enervating self-indulgence; you have come to be followers of him, as he was of Christ, in his intense reality, in contrast with the world’s whited-sepulchre of unreality; you have come to be loyal servants of your God, amid all the prevailing disloyalty; as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, Who marked you as His own, ere yet you knew Him, while that mark alas! brands so many only as deserters. You have come, I hope, to be courageous, in the name of the Captain of your salvation, the Lord of hosts, amid the world’s mean shrinking cowardice, crouching before man’s opinion. You would, with generous hearts, shrink from ingratitude, treacherousness, cowardice, hypocrisy. You will be faithful by His grace, loving, loyal to Him, Who has so loved you, Who in those awful hours on the Cross had each one of you in his heart and died for you, as if there had been no other to die for.

You are now, in numbers, the fourth of those gathered here in walls like these, who are a good proportion of the future hope of educated England. What may not such a phalanx do, knit together in the one love of Him, Who loved each one of you with an individual, yet infinite love! You will never know in this life, the value of what you do, or of what God will do through you: nay, you will seem a failure and

<sup>x</sup> Col. W. Monthly Packet xlii. 570.

disappointment to yourselves, the more God raises your ideal of what, by His grace, He would do in you. The shallow only can be self-conceited. But you will have a power within you, greater than those against you. Unbelief, whatever vain confident show it may put on, loud as it may speak, or credulous as it may be of every novelty contrary to faith, feels its own inward uncertainty. It must be sceptical of its own scepticism. A little child on its knees has awakened a misgiving even in an intellectual unbeliever. It has what the other has not. You have a vantage-ground in faith, with which unbelieving intellect cannot cope. Boastful as its garrison may be, it is betrayed from within. It will overlook argument: it will elude proof: it will despise authority: it must, while it remains such, ignore its unseen, unknown God. The certain serene convictions of faith make it uneasy, as being of heavenly birth; and God the Holy Ghost is ever brooding over this chaos, as over that primæval darkness; the ocean of God's love is ever winding, this way and that, over the hard rocks, if so be it may find entrance in; Christ, Whom they know not, is ever invisibly interceding for them. Only, as said the dying Joshua <sup>v</sup>, "be ye very courageous to keep and to do all" that is commanded you.

Let Christ be ever in your hearts; keep His Cross ever before your eyes. He Himself looks down from His glory upon you; He fights and conquers in His faithful servants; He rejoiceth in them. O what joy like that of giving joy to our Redeeming Lord! what joy like that of gaining by His grace even one soul, to joy in Him for ever!

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