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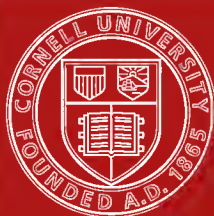
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SERMONS AND ADDRESSES



# SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

BY

1838  
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## PREFATORY NOTE.

SOME of the discourses in this volume have previously appeared in print. Most of them are now published for the first time. The occasion on which any of them was delivered has been indicated only where it was deemed necessary to do so.

For revision of the sheets of the volume in passing through the press I am deeply indebted to the same kind friend who revised my "Theism" in 1877, and "Anti-Theistic Theories" in 1879.

JOHNSTONE LODGE, CRAIGMILLAR PARK,  
EDINBURGH, *September* 1899.



# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A UNIVERSITY TERCENTENARY SERMON	1
CHRISTIAN UNITY . . . . .	11
THE GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT OF ART. . . . .	28
JESUS CHRIST, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS, THE FIRST-BEGOTTEN OF THE DEAD, AND THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH	39
THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S . . . . .	56
CLAIMS OF DIVINE WISDOM ON YOUNG MEN . . . . .	67
THE CHIEF GOOD . . . . .	82
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN . . . . .	94
THE DIVINE WILL . . . . .	109
ONE THING NEEDFUL, AND ONE THING TO BE DONE . . . . .	123
BEHOLDING THE WONDERS OF GOD'S LAW . . . . .	133
NONCONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD . . . . .	145
REST IN CHRIST . . . . .	155
SUPREME LOVE DUE TO CHRIST . . . . .	166
A FAITHFUL SAYING . . . . .	176
CHRIST SUFFERING FOR SINS . . . . .	184
THE LAMB OF GOD . . . . .	196
ENDS OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION . . . . .	204
CHRIST MADE UNTO US WISDOM . . . . .	213
CHRIST MADE UNTO US RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . . .	223
CHRIST MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION . . . . .	234
GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY—MAN'S EVIL EYE . . . . .	241
RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S . . . . .	254
WORK WHILE IT IS DAY . . . . .	264
CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO OTHER RELIGIONS . . . . .	275
SOME REQUIREMENTS OF A PRESENT-DAY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS	299



# SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

## I.

### A UNIVERSITY TRICENTENARY SERMON.<sup>1</sup>

“Remember the former things of old : for I am God, and there is none else ; I am God, and there is none like me.”—ISAIAH xlv. 9.

“Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—PHILIPPIANS iii. 13, 14.

WE have come together at this time to “remember the former things of old.” Whether drawn hither by interest in an institution in which we hold office, or by gratitude for the benefits of education received in it, or by a patriotic appreciation of the services which it has rendered to our native land, or by a generous recognition of its claims to honour as one of the world’s great schools of learning, our common purpose is gladly and gratefully to commemorate whatever in its history we can regard with legitimate satisfaction.

And surely we may well so regard its history as a whole. When, three hundred years ago, the University of this city had its small and humble commencement, like a tiny, feeble plant, set in a frozen soil, under a wintry sky, and amidst gathering storms, it “scarce reared above the parent earth its tender form.” Its development through its earlier stages was slow and precarious, not its prosperity only but its very existence long depending on a multitude of changeful and conflicting influences, any one of which might have been fatal to it, while no human sagacity could have foreseen their real effect on its destiny ; but the needed protection and support were continuously vouchsafed it, until at length there came happier days and clearer skies, the abundant dew and the bright sunshine, and the truly astonishing growth of recent times.

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Giles’ Church, Edinburgh, April 16, 1884.

It has throughout been ministered to according to its wants. For example, at critical seasons the fittest men to preside over its affairs have always been granted it. Thus, when, at its origin, its feeble vitality could only be preserved and developed by intense religious zeal, Rollock was given; when the storms of religious passion swept over the land, the most competent directing mind which Scotland then possessed—that of Henderson—was placed at its service; when fanaticism and intolerance had converted the country into a well of Marah, in which all sweetness was in danger of being lost, and when safety was only to be had in pious quietness, the saintly Leighton was lent; when political sagacity was peculiarly required, it was conferred in the person of Carstares; and when the transition from an ecclesiastical to a literary epoch needed to be wisely effected, no one more suited to direct the movement could have been found than Robertson.

What has been contributed to the prosperity of the University by patrons, protectors, and benefactors; what measure of strength or renown it has received from the achievements and distinction of those who have filled its higher offices and its special chairs; what literature, learning, science, philosophy, medicine, law, theology, owe to those who have taught in it or to those who have been trained in it; what numbers have gone forth from it and what influence they have exerted; how all bitter controversies within it are at length ended; how its students have increased; how its government has been widened;—these are things to which it would be unreasonable to do more in this place than simply refer, but they are among the things most appropriate for us to bear in mind, and things the contemplation of which may well deepen our sense of indebtedness to the wisdom and the goodness ever present, never failing, through the three hundred years of history which we commemorate.

In remembering things like these, must we necessarily indulge in a self-exalting spirit? I trust not, and cannot see why we should. If, in the proceedings in which we are to be engaged, any one connected with the University should have to descant a little on its glories, or even on those of his own office, must he thereby inevitably lay himself open to the charge of

self-glorification, as having been deemed worthy of association with such an institution, or of succeeding certain famous men? Surely not. Surely the true and natural consequence of any thoughts appropriate to this time must be rather to diminish than to increase our feelings of individual self-importance. Surely connection with any great historical institution which has been blessed with length of days, with gradually gathered honours, and accumulated means of usefulness, ought to cause a man to realise that the institution does more for him than he can do for it; that office therein gives to the holder thereof far more of influence and of credit than the holder can give to the office; that the parts are, in this instance, far more dependent on the whole than the whole on the parts; that while the worthiest and most active of the parts must soon decay and pass away, the whole can so renew itself as still to live on and prosper; that the work of the individuals in this large and enduring society derives in a great measure its value not from the personal merit of the workers, but from its relation to what has been done by their predecessors and is being done by their colleagues.

It is one chief reason for not ignoring any real and solid ties which bind us to the past and to our fellow-men, that we are thereby in some measure emancipated from the thralldom of a narrow and selfish individualism. It is one great advantage of connection with institutions which are not the mere products of a day or the creations of an individual mind or will, but truly historical growths, sealed with God's own impress of permanence, that we are, in consequence thereof, naturally, if not necessarily, made to feel that we are sharers with men of many generations in a life far larger than our own. The consciousness of membership in such an institution deserves to be cherished just because it so directly counteracts an isolating self-glorification, so naturally tends to a due forgetfulness of self in a true recognition of our relations to others, and so manifestly contributes to generate and strengthen that sense of membership in the body-politic whence springs patriotism, that sense of membership in the holy Catholic Church which finds expression in Christian piety, and that sense of membership in universal humanity which is the source of philanthropy.

It may lead us to magnify our offices ; it may render us more sensible of the honourableness of our work ; it may give us assurance that what we do in connection with, and for the good of, the whole to which we belong, will in some form outlive ourselves, and not cease to influence future generations ; but it ought to make us think not more but less of our own small individualities.

Nay, more : to realise aright the significance of the things we would commemorate, and to feel what is implied in our relationship to them, must carry our minds and hearts yet farther and higher,—must raise them even to an apprehension of that ultimate truth which gives unity to all thought, and to contact with that sacred Presence which gives sanctity to all action. The University has grown and prospered. Why ? Is it merely through what has been done within it or by it ? Is all said in explanation of its growth and prosperity when you have spoken of those who have ruled in it, taught in it, studied in it, and conferred benefits on it ? Certainly not. Obviously, one great reason why the University has grown and prospered is, that it has grown with the growth and participated in the prosperity of a life larger than its own. It has been received into and appropriated by the national life, been responsive to and expressive of the national life ; and placed here in this city at the very centre of that life, the organ has shared in the good fortune and well-being of the entire organism. It is what it is this day, after its three hundred years of existence, because these three hundred years have been not only to it but to Scotland what they have been ; hence, although almost two out of these three centuries were peculiarly dark and sad, distracted with civil and religious strife, and crowded with manifold crimes, follies, and afflictions, yet throughout the whole period a spirit, a life, large enough to pervade a nation, and to connect and comprehend a series of generations, has ruled and worked, and made for truth and righteousness, and at length brought about that unity and order, that political independence and spiritual freedom, that measure of reasonableness and good feeling, that degree of peace and prosperity which we are privileged to enjoy, and owing to which so many of our institutions flourish.



But is even this all? Has the University lived only in the life of Scotland? Has it prospered only because it has been enriched with Scottish thought and sustained by Scottish energy? Nay. On the contrary, Scotland itself has lived and prospered only because participant in a life larger than its own,—a life with which its Universities have especially served to connect it,—the life which rules and works in universal humanity—which binds together all generations and peoples—which, during the last three hundred years, has been lifting up not Scotland only but all the nations of Europe into higher regions of thought, into a purer atmosphere of feeling, and marvellously revealing itself in the discoveries of science, in the developments of art, in great social changes, in the increase of all kinds of knowledge, in the history of the human intellect and its ideas, of the human heart and its affections, of the human will and its energies. There has been one life which, although working in many lands and under the most diverse conditions, has never lost its unity; there has been one spirit everywhere present, which, amidst all follies and perversities of men, has never contradicted its character as a spirit of truth, of justice, and of goodness; and this universal life makes of the nations an organic whole and members one of another; this all-pervasive spirit is the great common teacher of the schools of the world, and causes each to be a debtor to all the others.

This life, this spirit, what is it? What but the life and the spirit of God? Of God, the unknown, the unknowable, in an infinity of respects; but also of God, the knowable, the trustable, the lovable; the ever and everywhere self-revealing God, who shines upon us from the remotest stars, who acts in every atom of matter, who vitalises every cell of our bodies, who is the light in every true thought and the virtue in every great and good deed, who rules the whole history of humanity from within, determining both its path and its goal; the God in whom we live and move and have our being, and into communion with whom we can enter alike by the life of reason, of love, and of duty; the God whom to serve is highest glory, whom to enjoy is deepest happiness.

Remember the former things of old, for God is God, and

there is none else; for He is God, and there is none like Him. It is the traces of the power and wisdom, of the life and love of God in those former things, which make them worth remembering. It is remembrance of them in relation to Him which is the right remembrance of them,—such a remembrance of them as can do us no harm, and may well do us great good.

We do well, then, this day to remember the former things of old, and to commemorate the history of the University. We do well if we seek to appreciate at its full value the inheritance which our predecessors have left us; to stir up within us the consciousness of participation in the corporate and collective life of this national institution; to put away from us the shallow and dangerous spirit which ignores or despises the past, and regards even its most helpful ties merely as chains to be broken; and to cherish instead a spirit which discerns and reverences the reason that has ruled in history—which would retain, apply, and utilise whatever of truth and goodness the past has brought down to the present—which is humble enough to feel and intelligent enough to perceive that it needs whatever strength and wealth it can derive from the past to fulfil the duties of the present and to meet the demands of the future.

But this is only the half of the truth and the half of our duty. The God who has been in the past—the Spirit of life, and truth, and goodness which has pervaded the past—is in the present and will be in the future, and we must not so cling to the dead past as to lose hold of the life which was in it, but has now risen above it, and is ever rising higher. The past itself has been, as it were, constantly striving to transcend itself, and we should be unfaithful to the whole spirit and teaching even of the past, if we did not, like the apostle, forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. While, therefore, we reverence all that has been honourable in the past, and utilise all that is useful which has come down to us from the past; while we distrust all modes of thought and schemes of reform which do not adequately take account of the past,—let us not suppose that we can abide in the past or perpetuate the past; that we

ought to retain anything which has plainly outlived its usefulness ; that we can meet new requirements with old resources ; that the problems of the future will not task to the utmost our inventiveness as well as our energy ; that we may afford to shut our eyes to the light which shines from any land, or to reject aid from any quarter. Let the dead bury their dead, but let us follow that which never dies, and the revelations of which are ever increasing in clearness, in fulness, and in beauty.

The past has brought nothing to perfection, and the future ought to be in all respects an advance and improvement on the past, since it can start from it and profit by it. The appearance of a pessimistic philosophy here and there, and the still wider prevalence of a pessimistic frame of spirit, do not prevent the present age from being on the whole an exceptionally hopeful one, and, doubtless, it will be its own fault if that hopefulness prove vain. It is not into a dull and uninviting future, not into one which we need fear to find empty or unremunerative, but into one filled with the promises of discovery, gleaming with the crowns of victory, that we are called to enter.

“ Before us shines a glorious world,  
Fresh as a banner, bright, unfurled,  
To music suddenly.”

In all directions new fields of thought and enterprise are being opened up to the human mind, and new conquests are being placed within its reach. Old subjects, like the speech and thought of ancient Greece and Rome, have come to be seen under new lights, and instead of having lost in value, as the ignorant or superficial may suppose, have acquired in these latter times a previously unknown significance, rendering them more capable than ever of rewarding a life's devotion to them, and more deserving than ever of recognition and support. That in the regions of mathematics great discoveries and useful applications may be indefinitely multiplied, if only an adequate supply of competent minds be forthcoming, and sufficient inducement for them to work be provided, is what no one will dispute. The extraordinarily rapid advance of the physical and biological sciences in recent years, has led some to suppose that their present pace of movement cannot long

be maintained, but the suspicion is only shared in by those who judge them from without, and finds no acceptance among those who are able to see from within, and who are consequently aware that, numerous as are the questions which these sciences have of late been answering, still more numerous are the questions which they have been raising and leaving to be answered in the future. This, however, is obvious in regard to them, that in the same degree in which they are developed and specialised, in which their spheres of research are extended and their means of research improved, must there be an addition to the demands on any community which would support them in efficiency to submit to the sacrifices involved in increasing the number of their teachers and in providing the more abundant, more elaborate, and more expensive instruments and appliances of investigation required. The mental and moral sciences, historical and social studies, and the various philosophical disciplines, are also becoming inspired with a new spirit, new energy, new hopes, new ambitions, and have manifestly a great future before them. It is a future in the achievements and rewards of which the Universities of Scotland must naturally desire to share in a measure which will be at least not unworthy of their past. But if their desire is not to be an illusion, there must be adequate efforts put forth to realise it. The provision made in our Universities for teaching and study in these departments of knowledge must not be that merely which availed in the past, but that which suits the present and will secure progress in the future.

The Faculty of Arts has to reach forth unto such things as securing that its entrants be duly prepared, that certain great departments of thought and learning cease to be neglected, that justice to the various studies be obtained through giving freedom in the choice of studies, and that sufficient provision be made for furthering high special attainments. The Faculty of Medicine has before it the simple but pressing problem of the completion of the new buildings, and what further problem I know not, save how to go on prospering as it has been doing. The Faculties of Law and of Theology both need great enlargement, and the latter perhaps organic changes. This city itself has within it the materials out of which, if wisely used, there

might be built up, within the University, to the great honour and profit of the nation, a magnificent school both of law and of theology. Those who aim at this for the Faculty of Law will doubtless press forward towards it with a hopeful spirit as to a thing which is surely, although it may be slowly, obtainable. Those who aim at it for the Faculty of Theology may have less confidence of success, knowing that sectarianism has had in Scotland many a sad triumph over enlightened patriotism, and that the ecclesiastical world has been always peculiarly slow to give heed to the word, "let the dead bury their dead;" but they can at least strive in the assured faith that they are on the side of freedom and of science, of religious progress and the public good.

In reaching forward to these things, and to all others which may add to the usefulness of the University, and cause it better to fulfil the ends of its existence—in pressing on to them, be it as members or as friends, as operating from within or co-operating from without—we need have no hesitation in doing so as called of God to the work, and no fear that in yielding ourselves heartily to this or to any calling of His we shall fail to gain the goal of life, the prize of His approval and blessing. There are no ways by which the University can be benefited but ways by which God's work will also be done and His name glorified. Nay, more; all our work in the University or in connection with it, like all other work to which God calls us, is work to which He calls us in Christ Jesus, and which we may perform in Christ Jesus. For Paul the high calling of God was to the work of directly preaching the Gospel; but that is by no means the calling of all men, nor is that the work by which all men may do most for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. A great discoverer in science may contribute, by the light which he throws on the character of God, and by the beneficial effects of his discoveries, far more to the establishment and growth of the kingdom of Christ than a thousand preachers. It is a grievous pity when such a man does not know the full glory of his own work, owing to his ignoring its relation to the work of Christ. All good work is work which tends to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and which should be done in Christ's spirit. Every high

and honourable calling is in Him, and the blame is ours if it be not accepted and acted on in Him.

We would commemorate, then, the past of the University with gratitude to God for His goodness, and anticipate its future in the trust that that goodness will be abundantly continued. Its past is, in great part, not dead, but yet living in us and living for us,—a source of strength in the present, and a ground of hope for the future. The hearts of the generous and patriotic turn with trust, with affection, with pride, to old things, around which, while meeting the newest needs, noble memories and dear associations cluster. Look around; for you can have no better illustration of what I mean. Not long ago there could have been no assembly here like that now before me, so grievously marred and deformed had this venerable edifice been allowed to become, although its every stone speaks, and its every pillar is wreathed with the associations of centuries; but these stones did speak to the spirit—these pillars did touch the heart—of one, recently removed from among us, who loved well the old things of his country's history, and on this our Tercentenary, but also the anniversary of William Chambers, we are profiting by the restoration of old St Giles', due to his public spirit and munificence. May we not believe that it will not be otherwise with our University? May we not believe that in the time to come there will be many moved by the remembrance of its past to labour in restoring whatever may have been wrongly allowed to lapse into decay; in improving whatever is defective; in enlarging, enriching, and beautifying, materially and spiritually, the edifice which through three hundred years our fathers have been building up, but which still admits of many a useful and fair addition, of many a strengthening buttress, of many a higher storey, of many a hall and chamber, of many a chancel and chapel, of many a pillar and turret? May it be so. And since the God who has blessed our University in the past can bless it still and evermore—since He it is who was, and is, and is to come—who faileth never, and betrayeth never—let us commit its interests to Him. To Him also let us commit our own interests, our own selves, our own souls. And to His name be all praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

## II.

### CHRISTIAN UNITY.<sup>1</sup>

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”—JOHN xvii. 20, 21.

THESE words contain truths and suggest reflections which are manifestly appropriate in the circumstances in which we are met. Any remarks which may help you to enter into the spirit and meaning of them cannot be otherwise than seasonable. Let Christ Himself, therefore, be our teacher ; let the speaker merely repeat what He taught, and may the Holy Spirit guide both speaker and hearers to a right understanding, and a hearty reception of what He taught ; and may the truth thus understood and received be profitable unto us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The circumstances in which the words of the text were first spoken could not have been more fitted than they were deeply to impress the truth in them on all Christian hearts and consciences throughout all lands and ages. When our Lord breathed them forth in prayer He had just instituted the ordinance which was to commemorate until He came again His own death. He had immediately before his view the cup which His Father had prepared for Him to drink, the agony of Gethsemane, the sufferings and the shame of Calvary ; yet with divine unselfishness His thoughts were occupied about others, and His affections were going forth towards others. He was doing what He could to comfort, to encourage, to enlighten the few sorrowful, perplexed, disheartened men who were beside Him, and whom He was so soon to leave. But His care and His love were not confined to them, or to the

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Giles' Church, Edinburgh, July 3, 1877, at meeting of the First General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance.

small number of persons scattered through Judea who had trusted that He would redeem Israel, and whose affections were still not wholly withdrawn from Him, although their hopes were overclouded or extinguished. He knew that the doubts and fears of His disciples were, as far as they regarded Himself, altogether vain. He knew whence He came into the world, and why He came—who sent Him, and for what He was sent; that His work was one which could not fail; that the Father would glorify the Son that the Son might glorify the Father; that the Father had given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to a mighty people to be gathered out of all the nations of the earth. He knew that the honour of God and the salvation of men were alike dependent on the success of what He had undertaken. He looked, therefore, beyond the apparent defeats and passing sorrows of the present, and beyond the sufferings of the immediately impending future, and He saw that despised Gospel which He was about to seal with His blood, spreading beyond Judea, beyond the farthest bounds of Roman rule, over lands whose names His contemporaries knew not. He saw that it was to outlive empires, the foundations of which had not then been laid, to destroy whatever was opposed to it, to pass through the strangest vicissitudes of thought as gold through the fire, and to diffuse light and life through all the coming ages. He saw it gaining to God and to Himself the countless multitudes of the redeemed, and His loving heart embraced them all, and out of the fulness of His heart He prayed for them all, and His prayer was “that they all might be one.”

In praying thus He asked, we may be sure, the very best thing for them which He could. He had already on this memorable night bequeathed to His followers His great gift of peace; He had laid on them His new commandment, “Love one another”; and now He asked for them what included both—that unity which could only be obtained through obedience to His law of love, and which was inseparable from such peace as He had to bestow.

But that we may know the worth of what He asked on our behalf, we must know what it really was. Its nature has



often been grievously misunderstood, and the consequences have been most lamentable.

In every sphere of thought and life there is a serious danger of taking a false unity for the true. The aim of all philosophy, for example, is to reach a true intellectual unity, and the love of unity is its very source and life; yet it has also been the chief cause of its errors, and all false systems of speculation, like materialism and idealism, positivism and pantheism, are simply systems based on false unities, on narrow and exclusive unities. There is a unity of political life which is rich in blessings; and there are caricatures of that unity which have only originated cruel and perfidious acts, foolish and unjust measures. But nowhere have erroneous views as to the nature of unity been so mischievous as in the province of religion. In the name of Christian unity men have been asked to sacrifice the most sacred rights of reason, conscience, and affection. Independence of judgment, honesty, brotherly love itself, and every quality which gives to human nature worth and dignity, have been treated as incompatible with it. In former days it was thought that Christian unity could be forced upon men by violent and bloody hands; and in later times it has often been supposed that it could be promoted by wrathful words and the arts of worldly intrigue. Throughout the whole duration of the Church, the unity which our Saviour prayed that His followers might enjoy has been widely confounded with kinds of unity which have no necessary connection with either Christian peace or love, and which may be, and often have been, the occasions of most unchristian discord and hatred.

What, then, is the unity which Christ prayed for when He asked on behalf of His followers "that they all might be one"? Well, this at least it certainly is—a unity of supernatural origin. It has its foundation not on earth but in heaven, not in man but in God. It is not of this world nor of the will of the flesh; it is not a mere expression of the likeness of human nature in all men; it has its root and source in the eternal nature of God—in the infinite love wherewith He loved us before the world was. It supposes a reception of the word or doctrine of the apostles regarding

Christ, and, consequently, faith in Christ Himself, as the God-man, the brightness of the glory and the express image of the person of the Father. It is the natural and necessary expression of the common relationship of believing men to the one God—the one Saviour—and the one Spirit. There is one faith, one baptism, one hope on earth, because there is one Father, one Redeemer, one Sanctifier in heaven. Unity on earth below is the result of a unifying work accomplished by God who is in heaven above, through redemption in Jesus Christ. Sin produced disunion. It separated men from God and men from one another. Christ came to undo the work of sin, and to bind together more firmly than ever what it had torn asunder. Through faith believers are made one with Him; through His sacrifice they are made one with the Father; through being in the Father and the Son they are one among themselves—one in faith and feeling, in spirit and life—in their principles and their sympathies, in their affections and aspirations.

Such, whatever else it may be, is Christian unity. But this of itself is sufficient to separate it by a broad and clear boundary, yea, by an enormous chasm, from a unity which in the present day is frequently set forth in opposition to it—the unity proclaimed and glorified by Positivists, Humanitarians, and Socialists—the unity of mere human brotherhood. This is a comparatively new enemy of the faith. It may be said to have entered into general history with the French Revolution; it owes its very existence to the Christianity which it is set up to rival. But the signs of the times seem clearly to indicate that, under some form or another, or rather that under many forms, what has been called the religion of humanity—which is just the belief in the brotherhood of men separated from belief in the fatherhood of God, fraternity divorced from piety, unity detached from its supernatural root—will be one of the chief enemies which Christianity must contend with. Merely ecclesiastical questions will probably have far less, and social questions far more, importance assigned to them in the estimation of Christian men in the future than they have had in the past, and all Christian Churches, it is to be hoped, will henceforth realise better

than they have hitherto done that their duty is to conquer the world around them, and transform it into a part of the kingdom of Christ—to sanctify society, and to stamp the image of the Redeemer on all the relations of life. But in attempting to accomplish this task, Christian belief will assuredly be resisted by worldly unbelief, and yet in such a struggle, the foe of Christianity, to have any chance of success, must be neither wholly worldly nor wholly unbelieving; it must have some positive truth, some generous faith, some cause capable of eliciting enthusiasm. The world will not be conquered—not generally influenced and governed—by mere doubts, mere negations. But where is unbelief to get a truth, a faith, a motive which will serve its purpose? I answer that unbelief, although so fertile in doubts and negations, is so poor as regards the positive truth which can alone support and ennoble life, that it must borrow it from the very system which it seeks to combat, and that it can have no other originality than that which it gains by mutilating the truth which it borrows. To the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, it will oppose the latter alone—to Christian unity what it will call a broader, but what is really a narrower thing, a merely human unity—to the whole truth, the half truth. And for many a long day Christian men and Christian Churches will have no more urgent work to do than to show by words and deeds, by teaching and conduct, what is the whole truth and what is only the half truth; that the temple of human brotherhood can only be solidly founded and firmly built up on the Eternal Rock on which rests Christian faith; that the world can only be reconciled to itself by being reconciled to its God; that human unity can only be realised in and through Christian unity.

The unity which Christ asked for His disciples is, I remark next, a unity which has not only its foundation, but its standard or model, in heaven. His prayer is not only that His people may be one; but that “as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, they also may be one in us.” The union of believers not only flows from the union between the Father and the Son, who is the Mediator between the Father and us, but should resemble it as much as the relationship between

finite beings can resemble that between infinite beings. The unity which Christ came to realise on earth was one meant to reflect and express in a finite form the perfect unity of the Divine Nature. That unity, as Christianity has revealed it, is very different from the mere abstract unity of speculative philosophy—the wholly indeterminate unity of which nothing can be affirmed except that it exists; very different also from the solitary, loveless, heartless unity of the God of Mahommedanism. It is a unity rich in distinctions and perfections; the unity of an infinite fulness of life and love; the unity of a Godhead in which there are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a trinity of persons, a diversity of properties, a variety of offices, a multiplicity of operations, yet not only sameness of nature and equality of power and glory, but perfect oneness also in purpose, counsel, and affection, perfect harmony of will and work. It is in this unity, in the contemplation and fruition of which poets like Dante, saints like Saint Bernard, and divines like Melancthon, have supposed the highest happiness of the blessed to consist, that we are to seek the archetype of the unity of believers on earth.

It is one of the most marked and one of the grandest characteristics of Christianity, that it continually sets before us the heavenly, the divine, the perfect, as the law and rule of our lives. As Moses was commanded to make the tabernacle for the children of Israel in all things according to the pattern shown him in the Mount, so, it has been truly said, is the Christian commanded to frame his conduct in every respect according to the perfect model of heaven. To be perfect, as God is perfect; to do our Father's will on earth, as it is done in heaven; to love one another, as Christ has loved us; that is the uniform tenor of the teaching which we receive from the Gospel; and so here our Saviour's words remind us that we are to be one as the Father and the Son are one. If, as those who would found a mere human brotherhood dream, heaven were empty or wholly inaccessible to our faith—if there were no Father and no Son, or, at least, none to be known by us—if there were not in the Godhead itself an intimate indwelling of person in person, a perfect communion of spirit with spirit, an infinite love, all-comprehensive, all-persuasive, all-unitive—

would there be any real and adequate standard assignable to the unity of men with men, to the love of man for man? When one who disbelieves in God and His Son tells his fellow-men to be one, can he also reasonably and consistently tell them in what measure or according to what model they are to be one? No. He can find no rule in the history of the past, stained as that has been with hatreds and dissensions. He must not be content with merely pointing to good men, for clearly the best human lives have been very defective, and in many respects warnings rather than examples. If he say, "love and be at one as far as is for the greatest good of all," he gives us a problem to calculate instead of an ideal which can at once elicit and measure, which can at once sustain and regulate love and unity. If he say, "love and be at one as you ought," he forgets that the very question is, How ought we to love and be at one? Human unity is a derived and dependent unity, and its standard can only be the ultimate and uncreated source of unity—in the indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father.

The words of our Lord, I remark next, indicate to us not only the true foundation and the true standard, but also the true nature of the unity which He prayed for. What He asked was that all His followers might be "one in Us," one in the Father and in Himself—one in the Father through belief in Himself, which can only mean that what He desired was that His followers might all possess a common life—might all participate in the mind which was in Him—might all walk not by sight but by faith, not after the flesh, but according to the Spirit—and might all consciously feel and outwardly manifest that they were thus really one. This is, of course, a kind of unity which embraces all Christ's followers without any exception. The Church of Christ, which is the body of Christ, contains every human being of whatever kind, or tongue, or nation who has that life which is not of this world, but hid with Christ in God, and it contains only those who have it. Therefore the Church—the body of Christ—is one. It is one in itself, because one in its Lord; one in its many members, because these members are all united to Him who is the head of the Church—the sole head of the Church.

The headship of Christ and the unity of the Church are two aspects of the same truth. Christ is the head of the Church because He is the life of all, the guide of all, and the Lord of all who are within the Church; their life through the agency of His Holy Spirit, their guide through the instrumentality of His Word, and their Lord through the redemption of them from sin to His own blessed service. And just because Christ is thus the sole head of the Church, in the plain Scriptural sense of the great doctrine, the Church itself is one. Without Him it would have no centre of unity, no coherence of parts, no sameness of life, no harmony of sentiments, no commonness of purpose, while in Him it has all these.

Has them, I say, and not merely will have them. The unity of the Church is not simply a thing to be hoped for, prayed for, worked for; it is also a thing which already exists, and the existence of which ought to be felt and acted on. Christians are certainly far, far indeed, from being one, as Christ prayed that they might be one—completely one—one as He and the Father are one; they are far from that, because they are far from being perfect Christians; but in so far as they are Christians at all, they even are to that extent already one. To be a Christian is to be—through change of nature—through newness of life—one with all other Christians. Now, I know scarcely any truth about Christianity which we are more apt to forget, and which we more need to remember than just this, that Christian unity already exists as far as Christianity itself does; that we do not need to bring it into existence, but that Christ Himself by His work and spirit brought it into existence; that any unity which we are entitled to look for in the picture must be merely a development, an increase of that which already binds together Christian men of all denominations—not a something of an essentially different nature.

The great duty of Christians in this matter, some seem to think, is to ignore their differences, to conceal them, or to get rid of them anyhow; they appear to find it difficult to understand how there can be a unity co-existing with and underlying differences, and wholly distinct from the uniformity which can only be gained by the surrender or suppression of differences. This

is a very superficial view, for it represents Christian unity not as a living and spiritual thing at all, but as a mere dead outward form of doctrine or policy; it is also a very dangerous view, for it tends directly to the establishment of ecclesiastical despotism, the discouragement of the open expression of individual convictions, and the destruction of faith in the sacredness and value of truth. To me it seems that the chief aim and desire of Christians as to unity ought to be to realise their oneness notwithstanding their differences; to estimate at its true worth what is common to them as well as what is denominationally distinctive of them.

Christian unity does not require us to undervalue any particular truth, or to surrender any denominational principle, or even individual conviction, which is well founded; it merely requires that our minds and hearts be open also to what is common, catholic, universal; that we do not allow our denominational differences and individual peculiarities to prevent us from tracing and admiring the operations of the spirit of grace through the most dissimilar channels. There may be Christian oneness where there are also differences which no man can rationally count of slight moment. The differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics are of the most serious kind, religiously, morally, and socially, yet obviously the feelings to which St. Bernard gave expression in the hymn, "Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts," and those which Charles Wesley poured forth in the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," had their source in the same Holy Spirit, and their object in the same divine Saviour. There is a great distance, and there are many differences, between the Roman Catholic Church of France and the Free Church of Scotland, but Fénelon and M'Cheyne were of one Church and one in their spiritual experience. Saint Bernard and Pope Alexander VI., Fénelon and Cardinal Dubois, were united in the Church of Rome—who will dare to say that they were one in Jesus Christ? Saint Bernard and Charles Wesley, Fénelon and M'Cheyne, were ecclesiastically far apart—who will dare to say that they were *not* one in Jesus Christ? I trust that Protestants will never think slight the differences which separate them from the Church of Rome; and yet I hesitate not to say that when Protestants in

general are clearly able to discern the oneness even beneath these differences, and cordially to love whatever is of Christ and His Holy Spirit, even when it appears in the Church of Rome, a greater step will have been taken towards the attainment of Christian unity than would be the mere external union of all the denominations of Protestantism.

As to the differences between these denominations, they might surely exist and yet prove merely the means of exercising and strengthening Christian unity. If we can only be at one in spirit with those who agree with us in opinion, there can be little depth or sincerity in such oneness. The love which vanishes before a difference of views and sentiments must be of a very superficial and worthless nature. And, as a plain matter of fact, it is neither merely nor mainly the differences of principle or opinion between the various denominations of Christians which mar and violate their Christian unity, but the evil and unchristian passions which gather round these differences. The differences are only the occasions of calling forth these passions. If they did not exist at all, the same passions would create or find other differences, other occasions for displaying themselves. It is not when one body of men holds honestly, openly, and firmly the Voluntary principle, and another the Establishment principle, that Christian unity is broken, but when those who hold the one principle insinuate that those who hold the other are, simply in virtue of doing so, ungodly men, or men who disown Christ as the life and guide, the Lord and Head of His people. It is when, instead of cordially acknowledging and rejoicing in what is good in each other, each exaggerates what is good in itself, and depreciates what is good in the other, or even rejoices in its neighbour's humiliation or injury; and when those who represent them contend, by speech or writing, in a manner from which a courteous and honest man of the world would recoil; it is then that Christian unity is broken—visibly, terribly broken—for then the Christian spirit itself is manifestly absent, or grievously feeble.

All the differences of principle which separate most at least of our Christian denominations might redound to their common honour, and reveal rather than conceal their common unity, had



their members and spokesmen only a little more justice, generosity, and love—a little more grace and virtue—a little more of the spirit of that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. They might set a high value on their distinctive principles, and yet rejoice that what they held apart was so small a portion of the truth in comparison with what they enjoyed in common. It may, perhaps, be quite reasonable that for the sake of one principle as to which they differ two denominations shall stand apart, although on a thousand other principles they are agreed; but it cannot be reasonable that their divergence of views as to the one principle should shut their eyes and hearts to the fact that as to the thousand others they are agreed. And yet there is, as all experience proves, a very great danger of thus allowing distinctive principles to obscure or prevent our recognition of common principles. It is the penalty attached to all undue exaltation or glorifying of what distinguishes us from our Christian brethren. And met as we are as a General Presbyterian Council, I hope we shall be on our guard against such a danger. God forbid that the Presbyterian Churches of the world should have so little received the spirit or learned the law of Christ as that they should in any degree confound Presbyterian unity with Christian unity—or vainly boast of what is but an outward form—or say or do anything to hurt the feelings or the usefulness of other Churches which are as dear to the Saviour as themselves, and which are separated from them by so thin a partition wall as a mode of ecclesiastical government. We have come together as Presbyterians, but with the wish to promote Christian unity; and the very thought of Christian unity, if apprehended aright, must save us from unduly and offensively magnifying any secondary unity, any outward distinction.

Christian unity we have seen to be a spiritual unity which links together all Christians and underlies all the differences which distinguish them from one another. It is a natural and necessary consequence of this truth that Christian unity, although it may lean to such secondary unities as identity of doctrine, or uniformity of ritual, or oneness of government, ought never to be identified with them. Christian unity may

be where there are none of these things. It might not be where they all were. Take doctrine. Christian unity undoubtedly involves in its very essence a oneness of faith, for the Christian life is one of confidence towards God as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ—a confidence which is gained through belief in Jesus Christ, while that belief is gained through assent to what Scripture testifies of Jesus Christ. This unity of a living faith naturally finds expression in a unity of doctrine or creed. God and Christ are one, and the testimony of Scripture regarding Him is a self-consistent whole, and the longer, the more impartially, the more freely and honestly, the more reverently and profoundly that testimony is studied, the more likely, or, if you will, the more certainly, is unity even of doctrine to be the result. And it has been the result. The harmony of the creeds and confessions, not of Presbyterianism alone, nor even of Protestantism alone, but of the whole Christian world, is most comprehensive, while the harmony of the chief Protestant creeds and confessions is, of course, far more so; it shows us a unity of doctrine, surely, abundantly sufficient for almost every want of practical Christian life. One would call this unity or harmony of creed remarkable, were it not that obviously no very different system of the doctrines could be evolved out of the Scriptures by the collective labours of large masses of men one in spirit than that which has been derived from them and embodied in the creeds of Churches.

But while all this is true, and Christian unity thus naturally tends to produce a doctrinal unity, we must never confound these two things. A man may err very widely in creed, and yet have a sincere believing soul. He may greatly misunderstand many an instruction of his Lord and Master, and yet reverence Him far more, and love Him far better—and therefore, since love is the fulfilling of the law, much more truly obey His will—than a wiser and more instructed brother, whose exegesis of the New Testament is perfect. A Church might have a faultless creed, to which all its members unhesitatingly assent, and yet be devoid of Christian unity because devoid of the Christian faith, of spiritual life. Mere orthodoxy is deadly heresy. The purely intellectual unity reached through its purely intellectual assent is no operation of the spirit, but

where the spirit is not, life is not; and where life is not, death is. Life, however, is unity, and death is dissolution.

Besides, while Christian unity tends to doctrinal unity, there may never on earth be doctrinal identity. Whenever there is mental activity—free, honest, independent inquiry, such as there is whenever there is either intellectual or spiritual life—research is ever advancing; and the first results of advancing research into the meaning of either God's book of nature or His book of revelation are always discordant and unsatisfactory. There are conflicting opinions entertained on many questions regarding heat, light, and electricity; there are rival schools in geology and natural history; there is hardly a single subject in mental, moral, or political science about which there is not the greatest possible diversity of opinion. In all these cases, however, the continuance of free research will bring order out of chaos, harmony out of confusion, yet will the perfect order and harmony of nature be discovered and demonstrated only when science has fully comprehended nature, and there is no room left for fresh research. It is not otherwise with regard to revelation. We can only have an absolute harmony of opinion as to the Bible when there are no more new truths to be derived from it, or new questions raised concerning it, when its interpretation is perfected, and research regarding it completed. That will not be, I believe, before the day of doom. Certainly it will not be in our day, for never was Biblical research more actively pushed forward in all directions than just now. Never, therefore, were the Churches more bound, while conscientiously guarding old and assured truths, to beware of dogmatism as to new views, or of trammelling unnecessarily advancing research. The free action of spiritual life in the form of investigation and criticism when displayed in fields hitherto little trodden, and in questions hitherto little studied by us, may apparently produce, or really produce, for a season, only contradictory and destructive theories, yet in God's good time it will assuredly bring about unity and peace, and minister to faith and virtue, as it has done in fields already traversed and as to questions now settled.

Perhaps Christian unity—unity of spirit—also tends to ritualistic uniformity or uniformity of worship. There are

two grounds on either or both of which this may be maintained. It may be argued that there is a divinely appointed form of worship defined in the New Testament with sufficient distinctness, and that Christian men will sooner or later be all convinced of this, and will, of course, adopt that form of worship. It may also be argued that there is an absolutely best form of worship, and that when the spiritual life of the Church is sufficiently deepened and quickened it must assume that form as alone fully appropriate. And these two arguments may be combined; indeed, if there is a divinely-appointed form of worship it can scarcely be other than the absolutely best form of worship—the one most suitable in all lands, ages, and circumstances.

I have neither the time nor the desire to examine either of these arguments, but certainly I am unconvinced by either of them. I cannot see that there is one exclusively divine form of worship prescribed by Scripture and binding in all its regulations on men in all places and at all times, or that there is one absolutely best form of worship, identical and unvarying, no matter what may have been the history, or what may be the characters and circumstances of the worshippers. Hence, although I can hardly doubt that the more enlightened and earnest our piety becomes, the less value will it attach to accessories and imposing forms, the more suspicious will it grow of what is symbolical and artificial, and the higher will be its appreciation of those forms of worship which, with the greatest simplicity, naturalness, and directness, bring the soul into contact with the realities of worship, yet I can feel no certainty that there would be uniformity of worship even if there were perfect unity of spirit. I will therefore judge no man's worship by my own ideal of the form of worship. To his own master each man standeth or falleth. The unity of worship which is all important, is not in its form at all, but in its being in spirit and in truth. The form is entirely subordinate to the spirit. The true spirit is restricted to no one form, for the Holy Ghost has condescended to bless and to act through the most diverse forms. Therefore, let us not rashly pronounce any of them common or unclean.

Ritualistic uniformity, then, is not only not to be identified

with Christian unity, but probably not even to be included in the idea of Christian unity. The same must be said of oneness of ecclesiastical government or polity. Yet nothing can be more manifest than that within certain limits and conditions Christian unity must work very powerfully towards ecclesiastical oneness—towards the union of Churches. The main reason why not a few Churches stand apart is unhappily to be sought and found not in their principles, but in their passions. Jealousies, rivalries, recriminations, assaults upon one another, most unseemly and improper in themselves, and most injurious to the Christian cause, are exhibited, instead of Christian graces or practices. The strength and energy which should have been applied to the conversion and sanctification of the world are far more than wasted in warring with one another, in “biting and devouring one another.” All this is, of course, the very opposite of Christian unity, and must disappear in order that Christian unity may establish and display itself. Wherever there is a real growth of religious life, there a sense of the sinfulness of such a state of things, and of the evil which it causes, must spring up, and the desire for brotherly communion and co-operation be experienced. The spirit of love and peace, of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of man, working from within, cannot fail gradually to effect many an ecclesiastical alliance and union, and in all such cases there will be a clear gain to Christianity. There may be unions, however, which have no root in Christian unity, which are prompted by worldly motives, and effected from without. These merit no admiration, and are not likely to promote much the progress of the Kingdom of Christ. A true union between Churches must be rather grown into than directly striven for. Just as he who would be happy must not aim straight at happiness, but cultivate piety and virtue, so Churches which seek such a union as God will bless will only reach their goal by increasing in love to God and to all mankind.

I do not know that we are warranted to affirm with confidence much beyond this as to ecclesiastical union. There are not a few who hold that the Church, as the body of Christ, must become externally, visibly, organically one. This is the

sort of unity which the Church of Rome has ever maintained to be an essential characteristic of the true Church. Thus to be one is the ideal which she has so steadily striven to realise; and the ambition of attaining that ideal has been the inspiring cause of most of her crimes. It is a unity, I am persuaded, which would be pernicious if it could be attained, but which fortunately cannot be attained; an ideal which is a dream—a grandiose dream—and also a diseased dream; an ambition which is foolish, if not guilty. The notion of a universal Church in this sense is precisely the same delusion in religion as the notion of a universal monarchy or a universal republic in politics, and, in fact, implies that that Utopia is a truth which can be, and will be, realised. Human hands are utterly incompetent to hold and guide aright the reins of universal sway either in religious or civil matters. A universal Church would be as surely a misgoverned Church as a universal empire would be a misgoverned empire.

Before we can even affirm with rational confidence that all Churches will come to have the same kind of government, not to speak of the same government, we must have convinced ourselves that there is one kind of Church government which is alone of divine origin and authority. This is not now the prevalent view, perhaps, in Protestant Churches. Most Presbyterians probably, while claiming for Presbytery that it is “founded on the Word of God and agreeable thereto,” will not deny that the same may be said of other forms of Church government. The unity of the Church, the unity of believers, cannot in their view be bound up with any one kind of government. It is a unity not to be sought for elsewhere than in the love of God the Father, the cross of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the hearts of believers.

There are many truths in my text still unnoticed, but I shall only mention, and merely mention, the one which is most prominent. The oneness of Christians is not simply described as a blessing to themselves, but as what would be a blessing also to the world. If Christians sincerely and fervently loved one another, and loved the Father and the Son, and showed by their whole conduct how precious, how joyous, how divine a thing Christian love was, the world could not but be influenced

by the sight. The love of Christ's disciples towards one another would guide it to the love of Christ Himself, and the love of Christ to the love of the Father; and so the world would believe that God really had sent His Son, would cease to be the world, and would joy and glory in its Redeemer. If those who call themselves Christians were all really so; if they were one in Christ, and strove to be perfectly one; if, amidst all differences and distinctions, they had a profound affection for one another; if their very controversies were models of courtesy and their very disputings examples of meekness and humility; if brotherly communion, even with those ecclesiastically widest apart from them, were earnestly sought by them, and brotherly co-operation habitual to them, the effect on society would soon be very visible. The sarcasm of the unbeliever would be silenced; the native loveliness of the gospel would be made manifest; and Christians, thus one in heart and life, in affection and action, would come, with a moral might unknown by the world for ages, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

"Nothing," said one of the greatest of English philosophers, "doth so much keep men out of the Church, and drive men out of the Church, as breach of unity." "Keep your smaller differences," was the exhortation of the Reformer of Geneva; "let us have no discord on that account; but let us march in one solid column, under the banners of the Captain of our Salvation, and with undivided counsels form the legions of the Cross upon the territories of darkness and of death."

May God bless what has now been said.

And unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church of Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!

### III.

#### THE GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT OF ART.<sup>1</sup>

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”—JAMES i. 17.

THESE words plainly state that all good and perfect gifts come from one and the same source,—that every good gift and every perfect boon has its origin beyond time, beyond earth and man, beyond all secondary and creaturely causes, in the Eternal Uncreated Divine First Cause,—that all physical beauties, all providential bounties, all gracious influences, all that is true, all that is lovely, all that is pure and righteous and holy, all genuine satisfactions, all real blessings, are from the all-perfect and all-loving Father in whom we and all things live and move and have our being. As all rays of sunlight issue from the sun, so all good gifts are bestowed by the one good Giver.

But the words of the text mean more than this. They were spoken, as the context shows, to refute and rebuke the notion that God may tempt to evil. And they accomplish their object by describing God as one who not only gives all good, but who gives, and from His very nature can give, only good; whose “giving” always and necessarily is solely for good; whose “boons,” seeing that they must be like Himself, can have no faults in them. His gifts may be abused, but the abuse is no part of the gifts; the goods He confers may become the occasions of temptations to evil, but as He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man; in spite of the light from heaven we may stray, but the light from heaven never leads astray.

God gives only good, never evil, as the sun gives only light, never darkness. He is “the Father of lights, with whom is

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Giles' Church, Edinburgh, October 27, 1889, before the National Association for the Advancement of Art.



no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—“no variation or shadow cast by turning.” The sun in the heavens ever raying forth light and heat, and so beautifying and nourishing all nature, is an emblem of God and His giving; but bright and glorious although it be, it is only a feeble and inadequate emblem. It is not always visible and present; it rises and sets; it is at one time nearer and at another farther from the earth; it so varies and changes that we have darkness as well as light, cold as well as heat. But it is not so with God. He changes not in His being, attributes, or operations, but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is all light, pure light; has no darkness or shadow in Himself; can have no darkness or shadow pass over Him; and His light shines, His good and perfect gifts flow forth from Him, without interruption, without cessation.

Such is the general meaning of the text; and now, with the help of Him from whom all good desires, resolutions, and endeavours, as well as all other good things come, I wish to give it such an application as may be suitable to the occasion on which we are met.

God as the perfectly good is not only Absolute Truth, and Absolute Holiness, but also Absolute Beauty. He is the source, the author, the giver of all beautiful things and qualities. All the beauties of earth and sea and sky, of life and mind and spirit, are rays from His beauty. The powers by which they are perceived are conferred by Him. The light in which they are seen is His light. As Beauty no less than as Power, as Life, as Truth, as Love, as Holiness, He is ever giving, ever giving good gifts, ever giving Himself, ever revealing Himself, for His giving of Himself is His revealing of Himself, and His revealing of Himself is His giving of Himself, whether it be in the fragrance of flowers and the songs of birds, or in inspired thoughts and sanctified affections of men, or in the incarnation and atonement of Him who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.

And how liberally and incessantly He bestows His gifts of beauty! And how good and perfect these gifts are! He gives with the affluence of an inexhaustible because infinite Being. The immeasurable depths of space are strewn with stars beau-

tiful in their colours, motions, and groupings. There is no painter like the sun, no brush like his rays. The sky is ever changing, so as to produce scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory. The successions of the seasons and the alternations of day and night bring with them heavenliest visions. Innumerable are the varieties of colour, of sound, and of motion, which please sense and heart and mind. The bleakest parts of earth, the loneliest nooks of the forest, the thinnest crevices of the rocks, are found adorned by flowers of exquisite grace. The tiniest creatures in the depths of the sea are moulded and tinted with an inimitable precision and delicacy. And the beauties of the material and animal worlds are surpassed by those of the mental and moral worlds—those displayed in the workings of human affection, in the movements of human thought, in the experiences of human life, in the scenes of human history. Wherever sympathy and generosity find expression, wherever there are traces of sorrow rightly borne or of the conquest of the spirit over the flesh, wherever personal worth or Divine grace makes itself visible, wherever there are actions with true human interest, pathos, or significance in them, there are beauties which the adequately refined and cultured judgment will pronounce higher than any presented by the qualities and combinations of matter.

Beauty has been scattered with so bountiful a hand around us that there is no need to travel to a distance to find it. It is in all places, on all faces, within all lives. It is on the surface almost everywhere; it is buried everywhere. To see it requires only the opening of an eye which has a soul behind it.

“If we have souls, know how to see and use,  
 One place performs, like any other place,  
 The proper service every place on earth  
 Was framed to furnish man with : serves alike  
 To give him note that, through the place he sees,  
 A place is signified he never saw,  
 But, if he lack not soul, may learn to know.  
 Earth's ugliest walled and ceiled imprisonment  
 May suffer, through its single rent in roof,  
 Admittance of a cataract of light  
 Beyond attainment through earth's palace-panes  
 Pinholed athwart their windowed filagree  
 By twinklings sobered from the sun outside.”

But God not only gives in inexhaustible profusion objects of beauty, He also gives power to see beauty, capacity to enjoy it, ability to express by various means and in various forms the visions of beauty vouchsafed and the feelings which they elicit. He implants, that is to say, in human nature those elements, emotions, and aptitudes, which are the roots of art with all its branches and developments. He bestows them on all men; and on those whom He destines to serve Him as artists He bestows them in an exceptional measure. They are among the common and essential characteristics of human nature—features of the Divine image in that nature—yea, that nature itself as receptive and reflective of the beauty revealed by God. The æsthetic nature in its own way, like the moral and religious nature, is the whole nature in a special attitude or relation; it includes head, and heart, and hand. As regards its higher endowments artists are, indeed, God's elected children, but Divine election is only the election of some to special privilege for the greatest good of all. Were not lower endowments the same in kind given to men in general, the artist's influence would have narrow and impassable limits, and his mission among his fellows would be restricted to action on the class or caste which least needed his aid. As it is, while God has given with special graciousness to him, He has also so given to all that the true field of the artist's influence is "the world," and it is only owing to the want of the appropriate culture or the positive degradation of human nature that his public is not all mankind.

Art is not less a gift of God to men because realised through the efforts of men themselves. It is not less a good and perfect gift because only slowly and progressively realised. Nothing could be less perfect in relation to man than an unvarying stereotyped perfection. Therefore the perfect, unvarying, changeless God has revealed His perfection through endless variation and change. Therefore His revelation of His beauty has been, like His revelation of His truth, His righteousness, His love, one made "at sundry times and in divers manners"—a vast development always in correspondence with the requirements and capacities of the recipients. He has gradually guided men to an ever clearer and fuller perception of the beauties displayed in nature, and gradually enabled them to build up a

world of beauty of their own with a charm and an interest in various respects even higher than that of nature.

This world of art made by men themselves, but by men empowered, inspired, and guided by God, has been gradually built up ever since man appeared on earth. Its beginnings must have been most rudimentary, otherwise they would have given no pleasure, and been of no use to the rude beginners. But already, in the quaternary period of geologists, the Cro-Magnon race had produced true artists. There has been no break in the history of art since, nor has there been any people wholly without art, any more than without morality or religion. From age to age, under Divine impulse and direction, all generations and nations have been co-operating and contributing to rear, to adorn, to fill a structure broad as the earth and rising towards heaven; and now that Egypt and India, Assyria and Persia, China and Japan, Israel and Greece, Rome and the mediæval worlds, and all the kingdoms of modern Europe have given of their best to it, now that architecture in so many forms, sculpture at every stage, the painting of all schools, the music of all lands, the poetry of all peoples have enriched it, now that it contains countless immortal and priceless productions of genius, it stands before us a magnificent and glorious fabric, a fitting palace for the Eternal King, a creation evoked by God from the human spirit, and not inferior to the physical cosmos evolved from chaos.

To dwell on the goodness and perfectness of God's gift of art would be easy, and might be profitable; but enough has, perhaps, been said to warrant and support the few words of practical application which are all that time will now allow me to speak.

First, then, seeing that beauty and art are good and perfect gifts of God, things of Divine sacredness and of Divine excellence, they are to be treated as such, to be revered and valued, to be cherished and cultivated. They ought to be so treated by all, and all will find abundant reward in gratefully, wisely, and justly appreciating them. In a world like ours, where there is so much to depress, to debase, and sadden life, it is a vast misfortune that any one should not have all the avenues of his soul as open as possible to whatever tends to

elevate, purify, and brighten existence, to give serenity to the mind and peace to the heart, and to reveal God in any of His aspects. But, of course, as wherever there is special privilege there is special obligation, the artist is specially bound to receive those gifts of God's goodness, those aptitudes of his own nature, which have relation to the discernment and realisation of beauty, with a grateful and loyal, an honest and good heart, jealously to guard them from all contamination and perversion, faithfully to improve and develop them, nobly to exercise and use them. He is bound to resist all seductions and temptations which would make his work unworthy of his high calling—less thorough, less sincere, less truthful and significant, less fair and elevating than it ought to be. He, a man generally more susceptible, perhaps, than other men to the shows and appearances of things and the lusts of the eye, the world and the flesh, must be ready and resolute to sacrifice all semblances without reality, all charms and pleasures which entice him from the pursuit of the beauty which is a joy for ever, all cheap popularity, all easy triumphs, all short routes to fame or wealth.

This he can only do if a good and true man, whose heart is high and pure, whose spirit is morally healthy and strong, who loves God and man, and is reverently obedient to the voice of duty. Whatever vitiates the character of the artist, robs him of inner force, of clearness of vision and self-control, must vitiate his work. Whatever ennobles, enlarges, and refines himself must enhance the excellence of his productions. He who would bring forth fruits of beauty must strive, therefore, to have a beautiful life—to be "all beautiful within." From the foul what is fair cannot come; from the mean the great cannot come. There is no law in the universe more certain or inexorable than this. Let no one think, therefore, that he may be a mean and evil man yet a great and good artist; that he may be true to himself as an artist, otherwise than by being true to himself as a man, and, therefore, also true to his fellow-men and to his God. He who would cultivate art aright must cultivate virtue and religion too. Virtue and religion, indeed, will not enable a man to become an artist who has not received the artist's special gifts, but every

virtuous quality, every religious excellence, will not only be a safeguard to the artist against the perversion and degradation of his gifts, but a source of positive strength and power in the use of them. The triple cord is stronger than the single thread. It is to their united strength that the artist must trust if he would overcome the trials and temptations of the disciplinary and preparatory stages of his life, and attain to that serene and happy region to which they alike attract us, and to which all that is best in us aspires—

“Where love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security.”

Secondly, the artist has not only to attend to his own self-culture, but also to accomplish an important social mission. Art does not exist merely for the advantage and enjoyment of the artist. Like everything else it may be perverted to selfish ends, but the perversion denaturalises and debases it, for it is essentially a social thing, meant for the good of man as man. The charm of it is not lessened by being shared, but is the better enjoyed for being enjoyed in common. The only appropriate soil or medium of it is one of sympathy, love, brotherliness. Its ends are not individual and class ends, but human and universal ends. Its goodness and perfectness as God's gift is seen in its fitness to be to all men, even to the humblest and the poorest, an enlarger of the range of thought, a refiner of the feelings, a source of impulse and inspiration in work, a soother of sorrow and giver of joy, a revealer of the invisible and spiritual—auxiliary to moral purposes, subservient to divine.

The social importance of art, perhaps, few adequately realise. It is in every way sufficient to entitle it to be ranked along with science and religion as regards beneficent tendency. Consider its most direct and obvious function—to give pleasure of a pure and special kind—pleasure which leaves no sting behind, but, on the contrary, evokes good feelings, and strengthens for good works. Is there not in that simply motive enough to stimulate to do his best any artist who is a good-hearted man, who loves his brother men, and wishes to see them happier and better? Is to diffuse pure happiness

not a good and godlike work? But art exists not merely to gratify our senses, and our minds and hearts through our senses, but to educate them, to give them increased power and delicacy, to renew and regenerate them. Art, through the works of artists, is meant to do for mankind in general that service which Wordsworth says his sister had done for him—

“She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;  
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;  
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,  
And love, and thought, and joy.”

This is a great and a blessed service, for men left to themselves have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not, and hearts but they are most unsusceptible and unintelligent. If they see and hear it is only with their eyes and ears, not through them with their minds and hearts, which is the only way of seeing and hearing worthy of a man ; if they feel and understand it is little beyond what they can weigh and measure, not the inner reality, goodness, and beauty of things. They need such eyes and ears, such hearts and minds, that all sights and sounds in the material world will be seen and heard as they are in relation to the spiritual world, and all the experiences of human life reveal what they imply of the mysteries of destiny. And such eyes and ears, such minds and hearts, it is one great function of art to give and educate. By performing it it may so reveal to us as almost to be said to re-create for us both the worlds of matter and of spirit, showing us

“The earth, and every common sight,  
Apparelled in celestial light,”

and causing us to see in the soul and its history wondrous heights and depths, splendours and terrors, the struggle of awful powers, infinite variety, endless contrasts, the most pathetic interests, the most solemn issues. The artist may well seek to be faithful to his calling in this respect. A painter, for example, may well be content to study and labour for years, to show how water ripples over a stone, or how a wind-driven wave breaks on the shore, or how in various lights

different objects loom through vapours, for in so far as he succeeds, mankind succeeds. His triumph is no slight and vulgar one; but this, what even he, exceptionally gifted and trained, found it so difficult to see, he has made comparatively easy even for common men to see from henceforth for ever.

But art has still other social duties. It may, for example, greatly contribute to increase the worth of labour and to promote the prosperity of industry. It is in vain to expect a man to become a good workman, who has not something of the artist's vision, and touch, and sentiment, who has no eye for finish and elegance, no neatness and deftness of hand, no love of and pride in good work for its own sake. A vast number of workmen unfortunately bring to their work merely their physical strength, not intelligence, taste, and skill. Wherever there is a numerous and increasing population, such workmen must be in constant danger of being greatly in excess of the demand for them. In this country the necessity is becoming ever more and more apparent and urgent, that workmen should be not mere workmen, but skilled workmen, artistic workmen. Of such workmen Britain is never likely to have too many, is always likely to have too few. How is she to get them? How are they to be formed and instructed? How is British industry to be allied with British art, so as to maintain the supremacy to which Britain owes so much of her greatness? These are questions which concern all, but in which artists have also a special interest, in connection with which they have special responsibilities, and to which they may well be expected to give special consideration.

One thing is obvious. If labouring men are to do more for art, art must also do more for them. It must come closer to them, and become familiar to them and to their children, in their common surroundings, in their home lives. If men and women are to be socialised and refined, made susceptible to the beautiful and the ideal, we must desire that they be born and brought up amidst very different circumstances than are to be found in the slums of our great cities. It is not beyond the resources of civilisation to make the blessings of art accessible to the poor; but these resources certainly require to be utilised with far more wisdom and energy than they have hitherto been.



Art cannot be better employed than in guiding, cheering, and glorifying labour. Wealth cannot be better employed than in aiding art, in this service.

Finally, the artist has not only to cultivate the gifts within him, and therewith serve his fellow-men, but also therewith to glorify God. He is God's debtor, and he ought to be God's minister. As both all beauty and all power to see and to reproduce it come from God, the artist may justly feel, yea, is bound to feel, that his whole professional life is occupied with the things of God. Even if not dealing with sacred subjects specially so called, if not cultivating some department of what is termed sacred art, he must realise that art is essentially sacred, the pursuit of it essentially a divine priesthood and ministry, and that his professional life ought to be throughout the whole extent of it, a consecrated life, a life lived within God's life, a hallowing of God's name, an advancing of God's kingdom, a doing of God's will.

The name of God is one which includes beauty as well as truth and righteousness, and will therefore never be fully hallowed without the efforts of art. The true and the good can never be perfected until they are permanently wedded to the beautiful, and the whole of life is transfigured into forms of beauty, and until then the kingdom of God cannot have fully come. The will of God is not a merely cold and stern physical and moral law, but one which lacks no beauty or attraction, which "wears the Godhead's most benignant face," and it cannot be rightly conceived until art has so revealed it.

If the artist, however, be called to a service so high and sacred as this implies, he ought obviously to be a man filled in his whole being with a sense of the nearness and glory of God, with the presence, power, and consciousness of God. His life should be so hid with God that he may see whatever is pure, good, and beautiful on earth as the outflowings of God's uncreated and ineffable loveliness and perfection. But thus to live with God and to see God the heart must be pure, the spirit right, and God present Himself as a reconciled Father. Thus to live with God and see God, man needs to accept the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, to yield himself up to the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, to

accept the Divine truth and grace offered in the Gospel. This  
may God grant that we all sincerely and rejoicingly do.

“Two worlds are ours : 'tis only sin  
Forbids us to descry  
The mystic heaven and earth within  
Plain as the sea and sky.

Thou, who hast given us eyes to see  
And love this sight so fair,  
O give us hearts to find out Thee  
And read Thee everywhere.”

## IV.

### JESUS CHRIST, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS, THE FIRST-BEGOTTEN OF THE DEAD, AND THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH.<sup>1</sup>

“Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, (and) the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.”—REV. i. 5.

**J**ESUS CHRIST is here set before us in three aspects which certainly merit our serious and prayerful consideration. Three most appropriate titles, full of meaning, full of instruction, are given to Him. Let us meditate for a little on each of these titles. Let us try to enter into the signification of them. Let us seek not to have any thoughts of our own about them, but to apprehend the thoughts of God which are already in them, and to accept these thoughts with the whole mind and heart, humbly and sincerely renouncing all thoughts, imaginations, and inclinations of our own which are contrary to them. May we—in the light which is from God and through the guidance of the Spirit of God—see the truth of this portion of His Word, and may that truth be to us strength and joy!

Jesus Christ our Lord is, then, in this verse, first spoken of as “the faithful witness.” This title is one which, on a very memorable occasion, He claimed for Himself. To understand the title we must go back to that occasion. Christ stood a prisoner before Pilate. His Jewish accusers, anxious to obtain against Him a sentence of death, charged Him with treason against the sovereignty of Rome, and alleged in proof that He had declared Himself to be a king. Christ calmly but emphatically repelled what there was of calumny in the charge. By a single sentence of explanation He made it manifest that His enemies had perverted His words; that no claim to kingship which He had made implied conflict or competition with

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Giles' Church, Edinburgh, May 29, 1881, and published by request of His Grace the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

the claims of the Roman emperor. "My kingdom," He said, "is not of this world." He thus gave Pilate an assurance that Roman rule had nothing, directly at least, to fear from Him—that He had made no claim to an earthly crown—that it was not His mission to be the rival or antagonist of Cæsar. "My kingdom is not of this world." It is not a sovereignty like that of the emperor; not a visible, temporal monarchy; not a kingdom which can be established, or sustained, or extended by physical power; not a dominion for the support or spread of which the subjects can reasonably make any use of carnal weapons.

Yet these words of Christ were not words of mere denial. They involved the assertion that He was of right and in very deed a king. "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" This clearly meant that He had a kingdom. Hence Pilate's next question was: "Art thou a king then?"—put perhaps in mere wonder, perhaps in sarcasm—perhaps to suggest that it would be well to speak more cautiously, and altogether to avoid the use of dangerous words like "king" and "kingdom." From whatever motive put, the question led our Lord to state more fully, more distinctly, what His claim was. "I am a king," He said. "For this very purpose was I born, and for this very cause came I into the world, *that I might bear witness to the truth.*"

This was how He was a king. He was born a king—came forth from the realm of eternal truth into the world to reveal and confirm truth—that so He might build up over the spirits of men a spiritual kingdom. He was willing to rest His title to rule over men on this, that He was the manifestation to them of the truth. There could be no title so good as that; and we may even say, no other title can be valid for the spirit. Force can rule the body; truth alone can rule the spirit. And to rule the spirit is obviously the truest kingship, for the spirit is meant to rule the body, and not the body to rule the spirit. The sovereignty which is based merely on force, and extends merely over the body, is but a superficial sovereignty even of an earthly kind. The highest idea of kingship is the ruling of spirits by the manifestation of the truth to their intellects and affections. This was the idea of kingship which Christ claimed to have realised. He presented Himself as a king in

the highest, and deepest, and truest sense, and in that sense only. By doing so His claims rose above all possible competition with those of Cæsar. No Cæsar ventured to claim—no Cæsar dreamed of claiming—more than a secondary and superficial sovereignty. No Cæsar even knew what true sovereignty was. That poor prisoner before Pilate professed to be—knew Himself to be—a king in a sense which placed Him far beyond the rivalry of the greatest and most ambitious of the Cæsars.

It is not simply, however, to truth in general—still less is it to special sections of truth, and least of all is it to isolated and particular truths—that Christ has come into the world to be a witness; it is to *the* truth—the source, the foundation, the vital essence of all truth—the light which shines through all truth, and in which all truth should be apprehended—the truth which is of primary and infinite importance—the truth which it is eternal life to know, and eternal death not to know. This truth Christ bore witness to not merely by preaching it, not merely by proving it, but by being it, by embodying it. “*I am the truth,*” He could say. That which in the Divine nature was unknown—which our thoughts and affections could not reach and grasp, yet which was the source whence alone spiritual life could be drawn—was brought near to us—was made to stand out clearly before our very eyes—was made an object for our minds to contemplate, for our hearts to love, through the Word becoming flesh. The power, the wisdom, the justice, the love, the mercy of God—all these Christ bore witness to, all these He showed forth, by being in Himself the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of His person. For this very purpose was He born; for this very cause came He into the world. Christ was thus a witness as none other has ever been. He testified of the Father by the direct revelation to us of the Father’s character in His own. He showed forth throughout His whole life from Bethlehem to Calvary—from the manger to the cross—the truth of the Divine nature uswards, testifying of all that was in the heart of the eternal Father towards His weak and sinful children; and this He did through being one with the Father—the perfect manifestation of the Father.

He thus stood not only pre-eminent but alone as a witness. As to *the* truth—the deepest and the highest truth—the truth of the Divine nature—the truth which is the soul's life—the witness of the world's greatest teachers has been dependent on that of Christ. He has been the primary and direct witness, while others have been only secondary and indirect witnesses. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Apart from Christ's testimony, no complete certainty is to be had as to God's true character,—as to his Fatherhood, for example, and redeeming love,—although to know God as He is, is to know the truth of truths—*the* truth. Certainty here, where certainty is most needed—because if not found here, the whole mind and whole life must be uncertain and unsettled—can only be had through Christ. If His testimony can be shown to have failed, there is no good ground at all to hope for that knowledge of the truth as to God which religion implies and demands in order not to be itself a delusion. Whether or not we are to give faith to the prophets, apostles, saints, and martyrs who have testified of God, must depend entirely on whether or not Christ has been "the faithful witness," for their testimony needs to be confirmed through His. If His testimony be not true, the prophets must have prophesied falsely, the apostles must have been fanatics or deceivers, and the saints must have lived and the martyrs must have died through belief in a lie. If His witness be not true, then there can have been no real witnesses at all to any truth higher than the truths of nature.

The faithfulness of Christ as a witness being thus the foundation of all reasonable trust in revelation and its disclosures—in redemption and its promises—the title of "the faithful witness" assigned to Him is manifestly a most sublime and honourable one. It is also a most appropriate one, as will at once appear if we ask ourselves what faithfulness in a witness means, and how Christ showed such faithfulness. Now, in the first place, a faithful witness to any truth is one who communicates that truth with accuracy and fulness; and Christ was

thus a faithful witness to the truth. The testimony of a faithful witness is true testimony—testimony which accurately and adequately sets forth to those to whom it is given that to which it relates; and such was Christ's testimony. He came to bear witness to the truth by the revelation of the Godhead; and He did so truly, accurately, adequately, making known the Father as He really is, so that he who has seen and known Him has also seen and known the Father. His testimony to the Godhead was the truthful, accurate, adequate testimony of one in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He showed forth its power, since man's feeble nature in its union with Him overthrew the dominion of Satan; its wisdom, since His work of redemption satisfied alike Divine justice and Divine mercy; its righteousness, since He became subject to the law and fulfilled all its requirements; its love, since in Him sacrifice was carried to its utmost conceivable extent—a height and depth, length and breadth, of self-denying affection which cannot be comprehended; its glory, its beauty, its tenderness, since Divinity expressed itself in Him in a humanity the most attractive, affectionate, and gentle. His testimony to what God is,—to the nature of the Eternal—to the character of Him with whom we have to do—to the disposition of the Father towards us, to the demands of His law upon us, and to His purposes concerning us,—is a testimony in all points absolutely true: it may be completely trusted; not one jot or tittle of it will be disproved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but it will endure for ever. He whose soul rests on it will not be deceived. Were it otherwise, Christ would not be the faithful witness. Since He is the faithful witness, it is assuredly so.

Further, a faithful witness to truth is not only one who accurately communicates it, but also one who steadfastly adheres to it; and in this way likewise Christ was the faithful witness. Faithfulness is shown by a witness not only in stating the thing to which he testifies truthfully, or as it really is, but in standing firmly and keeping honestly to what he says—in not contradicting his testimony in word or deed, directly or indirectly—in supporting and defending, and if need be suffering for, his testimony. The Greek word translated in the text “witness” originated our word “martyr,”

and even in late Greek usage bore the meaning of "martyr," just because a witness is one who ought to be, and who is expected to be, faithful in the sense now explained. This late meaning of the word lay in it in germ, as it were, from the first. It is not, indeed, the meaning of the word in the text. Christ is not expressly here called what we should term a *martyr*—that is, a witness whose witnessing lies precisely in His suffering and dying; but in His being called "the faithful witness," it is implied that He was such a witness as would not evade suffering and death if loyalty to the truth required Him to suffer and die. And such a witness He was. The will of God for our salvation did demand that He should suffer and die; and so obedient was He to that will that He rejoiced to do it—so loyal was He to the truth that He fulfilled every iota of it, every step and stage of it, although it was a long process of humiliation and pain, ending in the horrors of Calvary. To bear His testimony to the Father—that glorious and blessed testimony which constitutes the Gospel—Christ, although very God of very God, took on Him our frail human flesh with its manifold infirmities, was born in a stable, lived a life of poverty and obscurity in a Jewish village for thirty years, came forth publicly among men only to be despised and persecuted, and was at last put to death on the cross. It was at this cost that He bore His testimony; and he bore it meekly, patiently, with perfect resignation, with perfect fidelity, to the very end. It was only on the accursed tree, only when about to bow His head and breathe out His spirit, that He could say, "It is finished." Truly He is well called "the faithful witness."

If so, are there any lessons which we ought to draw from this fact? Surely there is at least this very great and very obvious one—that if Christ be "the faithful witness," we ought to listen to Him—that if His testimony be what has been described, we ought to receive it. If for this very purpose Christ was born, if for this very cause He came into the world, to bear witness to the truth, it must be a serious and terrible thing for us to reject the truth, since that implies that we attempt to defeat the great end of our Lord's incarnation and mission—to frustrate the righteous and blessed will of God in the unspeakable gift of His Son. We cannot do so without



perversity and guilt. You remember how Christ added to the declaration before Pilate to which I have already referred, these words—"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." They were solemn and terrible words for His Jewish accusers, who hated the truth, being blinded by their prejudices and selfish passions. They were solemn and terrible words for Pilate himself, whose very question "What is truth?" showed that he cared little for truth, and indeed that he deemed it only a sort of phantasm which deluded the ignorant and the enthusiastic, but which cool, clear minds like his own could see through, and see to be only an empty mockery. They are solemn and terrible words for all of us who do not accept Christ's testimony, whether our rejection of it be due to prejudice and passion akin to that of the Jews, or to a scepticism akin to that of Pilate. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." If we do not hear the voice of the faithful witness, let us beware and repent, and seek another mind and heart, for our disbelief is a sign that we are not "of the truth." This is the condemnation of those who reject Christ's testimony, the glorious Gospel of Divine love and grace, that through perversity of nature falsehood is more pleasant to them than truth—that owing to the evil which is in them they prefer darkness to light.

But we must not only accept the truth to which Christ testifies; we must also adhere to it, after the example which He as the faithful witness has set us. Whoever shares in the spirit which He manifested in witnessing to the truth—the spirit of absolute and entire devotion to it, shown in His never for an instant departing from it, but following it onwards step by step although it led Him steadily to the cross—must regard the truth as unspeakably sacred, must feel that to tamper with it is distinctly to deny his Lord, and will not cease continually to strive to realise it more perfectly in the inner and the outer man, in heart and life, speech and behaviour.

The second title given to our Lord in the text is "the first-begotten of the dead"—"the firstborn from the dead." What does this title denote? Obviously, it seems to me, two

things. The first is seniority of birth. The firstborn is he who is born first. Christ is "the firstborn from the dead," because the first who rose from the dead to eternal life. This is literally and strictly true, according to the representations of Scripture, although there had been resurrections before our Lord's. Elijah and Elisha had both been honoured to raise the dead, and Christ Himself restored to life the son of the widow of Nain and called forth Lazarus from his grave; but those who were thus raised were raised merely to a temporal and earthly, not to an eternal and heavenly life. They were delivered out of the hand of death after it had closed upon them, but only for a short time: they made no permanent escape from its power; they soon again fell under its sway; they still await a final resurrection. Only an entirely different kind of resurrection than theirs—only a resurrection like Christ's own—can satisfy hearts longing for a true immortality. By raising Lazarus from the dead our Lord showed a certain degree of power over death; but only by rising Himself from the dead that He might live for evermore, was death shown to have been completely conquered, alike as regards the body and the soul. He was the first who rose in the body to eternal life; the first who so rose, and the only one who has yet so risen, as those who aspire to eternal life wish to rise. This is one reason for His being called "the firstborn from the dead."

It is not, however, the chief reason. The title refers more to superiority of dignity than to priority of time. Christ is "the firstborn from the dead," just as He is, according to the expression of St. Paul, "the firstborn of every creature." These words of the apostle manifestly imply not only our Lord's pre-existence to creation, but His sovereignty and heirship over creation. They mean that as regards creation Christ holds the rank of firstborn Son; that the rights and honours of primogeniture belong to Him; that He is the natural and actual head and ruler of the universe; that as He was before, so is He above, all things. But as He is thus first with respect to the universe, so it was ordained that He should become first with respect to the Church. Having witnessed to the truth even unto death, He has over-

come death, and been put in the same relation to the spiritual new creation brought into existence through the truth which He always held to the natural creation. As the first-born of the dead He is the head of His body the Church, the heir in the household of faith; as pre-eminent in the world which lies beyond death—the world to which only our faith and hopes reach,—as He is in the world on this side of death—the world which our eyes see and our hands handle. Having died and risen again, He liveth for evermore, the firstborn among many brethren, the glorified and exalted elder brother, in whose honours and advantages the others share, but apart from whom they have nothing.

Understood as has now been explained, this title, “the first-begotten” or “the firstborn” “of the dead,” naturally follows the former title, “the faithful witness,” for it is in Christ’s being “the firstborn from the dead” that we have the chief guarantee for His being “the faithful witness.” Our Lord’s resurrection, which involves and implies His deliverance from death, His victory over him who had the power of death, and his elevation to the throne of mediatorial dominion, is the seal of God to the truth of His testimony. It is a conspicuous sign and manifest proof that the Father has accepted and approved the witness-bearing of the Son.

It is impossible to read the New Testament intelligently without being impressed with the prominence which all its writers give to the resurrection as their warrant for maintaining Jesus to have been the Messiah and Son of God. With one consenting voice, in every variety of form and on all occasions, they put it forward as the fact which proved the truth of the Gospel they preached—salvation through faith in Christ. The apostles went forth as the witnesses of the resurrection, fully acknowledging that if Christ were not risen the whole Christian faith was vain. Could the unbelieving Jews have only disproved that Christ had risen, they would have had no trouble with Christianity. This, however, they could not do, and consequently Christianity rapidly spread. Christianity rose out of the conviction that Christ had risen. The objections urged against it were felt by men of candid and ingenuous minds to avail little if the truth of the resurrection

could not be reasonably called in question. How the belief in the resurrection of Christ followed so closely on His crucifixion; how it spread so rapidly; how those who had every interest to deny its truth dared not do so, but allowed it to pass unchallenged; and how it produced the wonderful revolution which it effected on the minds and lives of individuals, and in the religion and morality of the world,—are problems which those who deny the reality of the resurrection and the authority of the Gospel, of which it was the most convincing confirmation, are still trying to explain, and are still signally failing to explain. The hypothesis of imposture perpetrated by the disciples is now abandoned even by every unbeliever of the least mental refinement or culture. The newer hypotheses of vision and of myth—of hallucination and of imaginative creation—are ludicrously inadequate to account for the facts which demand explanation. They only make it more apparent, if possible, than before, that the only reasonable and sufficient explanation of these facts is the simple one that He who was crucified, dead, and buried, verily rose again. The evidence which we have for Christ's resurrection will be found, when conscientiously examined, to be absolutely conclusive. We may almost as reasonably deny the reality of His crucifixion as of His resurrection. We have the same kind of evidence for both; and for the latter, as for the former, the evidence is overwhelming in amount, and possessed of all the characteristics of good historical evidence. The hypotheses by which it has been attempted to account for belief in the resurrection on the assumption that it never occurred, might be equally applied to account for belief in the crucifixion on the same assumption. Yet even the most reckless historical scepticism has not ventured to deny the reality of the crucifixion. Those who disbelieve that Christ rose from the dead should, in consistency, believe very few historical facts of any kind. But if He rose, His whole testimony as regards both the Father and Himself is indubitable; the divinity of His Gospel must be unhesitatingly accepted; the apostles whom He sent forth were heralds of the truth and ambassadors of the grace of God; and the Church which they built up is founded on an immovable rock, against which the waves of infidelity may beat, but it

will only be to make more manifest the contrast between its strength and their impotence.

It was not merely, however, as an evidence for the truth of the Gospel that our Lord's resurrection was so frequently referred to, and so strongly emphasised, by the writers of the New Testament. It does not seem to me that these writers ever record any fact or incident merely as evidence. I know of no miracle, for example, which is exclusively evidential and not a part of the substance, so to speak, of the Gospel; which does not illustrate and convey spiritual principles as well as serve the purpose of confirming and attesting them. And certainly the great miracle of the resurrection is no mere warrant of the faith, but also itself one of the fundamental truths of the faith. The apostles continually make not only an apologetic but a doctrinal and a moral use of it. They represent the justification of the sinner, the origination and development of the new life, and the final glorification of the believer, as all dependent upon it. They not only rest on it the Messianic claims of Jesus in so far as they were a response to the promises of prophecy in the past, but they point to it as a saving and sanctifying power in the present, and as the foundation of all hope for the future. They view it as necessary to the perfection of Christ's humanity and to the completion of His work; as the attainment of a fully developed life in the richness and blessedness of which every believer is to share; as the leading of captivity captive and receiving gifts for men; as opening to the eye of faith and hope a boundless vision of the renovation of creation, the development of the powers of human nature, the progress of the Church, and the future glory of the whole kingdom of God.

It is to be feared that many of us fail to follow their guidance in this respect as fully as we ought. It is to be feared that we often give to the resurrection in its higher and more spiritual relationships far too subordinate a place in our thoughts and affections. Some who have a firm faith in Christ's work of atonement feel but feebly the power of His resurrection. They seem unable to look beyond His death—beyond the cross and the grave. They realise their interest in His sufferings and humiliation much more adequately than their interest in

His honours and exaltation. They enter but little intellectually, and far less practically, into the signification of those numerous passages of the Epistles which point us above and beyond a mere trust in the death and the atonement, and which teach us that the life upon which Christ entered by resurrection from the dead is the life in which we must know Him, in which we must daily converse and commune with Him, from which our own life must draw its supplies, and in which our own life must, as it were, be hid.

This is not as it should be, and it is sure to lead to weakness and imperfection of Christian character and Christian conduct. We cannot think too much or too highly of the atoning death of Christ; but we must not forget that the resurrection is an equally essential fact in the Gospel, and that if it be true that Christ died for our sins, it is no less true that He rose again for our justification, and that we are saved through participation in the life which He now liveth as the first-born from the dead. The death of Christ was but a stage in His redemptive work, and we can only view it aright when we consider it not only in relation to the stages which preceded it, but to those which followed it. We must beware lest, with less excuse, we merit the rebuke of the angels to the women,—“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” Yes, “He is risen,” and our hearts must rise up to Him; our faith, our love, our hopes must follow Him; our souls must rejoice to be with our exalted Brother. “He is risen;” and we must seek to live under the clear light and full glory of a risen Saviour. “He is risen;” and it is for us to endeavour so to die with Him, and so to rise with Him, that we may know the comprehensiveness and depth of meaning in His words, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

The fact that Christ is “the first-begotten of the dead” has, like the fact that He is “the faithful witness,” its special lesson. If He be risen, we ought to rise with Him into newness of life. The Christian ought to be so one with Christ as to die with Him unto sin, and live with Him by a new birth unto righteousness. He ought to have his affections set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; to have his life hid with Christ in God, that when Christ his life shall appear,

he also may appear with Him in glory. Let us, then, live with His life; let us rise to newness of life by living to Him; for only so,—only through the oneness of our lives with His life—only through the participation of our spirits in His Spirit,—can we become heirs of eternal life. If we would meet death, and triumph, it must be through that spiritual union with Christ which will secure, that as He has risen from the dead, so we shall rise to follow Him and to be for ever with Him. No otherwise will it be given us to say, O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?

The text gives to our Lord yet another title. “The faithful witness” has not only become “the firstborn from the dead,” the Head of His body the Church, the Leader and Lord of those who are redeemed by His blood and sanctified by His Spirit, but He has risen to the throne of universal empire—has all power assigned to Him in heaven and on earth, and a name given Him above every name. “He is the Prince of the kings of the earth.”

“My kingdom,” He said, “is not of this world;” yet in saying so He claimed to be a king and to have a kingdom. The central idea—the burden and tenor—of all His teaching, was that of “a kingdom”—“the kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven.” All that He said related to its conditions, laws, government, service, antecedents, or consequences; all that He did was with a view to its foundation and diffusion. Of the Church itself He said but little; indeed He expressly spoke of it, so far as we can learn from the Gospels, by the term “Church” only twice. It is most instructive that He should have dwelt so incessantly and so emphatically as He did on the kingdom of God, and that He should have touched so seldom and so lightly on the Church. That He should have done so is no evidence that the Church is an unimportant institution, or that correct views regarding it are unimportant; but it is evidence that the Church, and the doctrines which directly refer to the Church, are secondary and not primary, subordinate and not fundamental. The Church must be rooted in and spring from the kingdom of God. The doctrine as to the Church must be determined by the doctrine as to the

kingdom of God. It was the doctrine of the kingdom which Christ Himself taught; the doctrine of the Church He left mainly to others to teach, or rather to evolve from the principles which He had expounded as to the kingdom. Those who put the doctrine of the Church in the foreground, and find in this doctrine a rule and test by which to measure and judge all other doctrines, have profited little by His teaching. It was strikingly devoid of churchliness. It was so filled with the kingdom as to reserve for the Church merely a ministerial or instrumental position. The Church, as Christ's institution, exists solely for the sake of the kingdom; it accomplishes its end only in the measure in which it extends and builds up the kingdom of God on earth. To identify it with the kingdom is to confound the means with the end—to disregard the very letter of Christ's teaching—to contradict its whole spirit and character—and to deny His real claims to kingship.

Christ is king of the kingdom of God on earth, and therefore "prince" or "ruler" of the kings of the earth. His kingdom claims to comprehend the State as well as the Church. The ecclesiastical and the civil ought to be only two aspects of it. Churches and governments are alike, of right, subject to it, and are both, in fact, often rebellious towards it. His kingdom extends to all the spheres and phases of life; it transcends all limits of race and language, of time and space; it combines earth and heaven; it is deep and broad as the truth, and the will, and the love of God; yea, it is just the manifestation of God's truth, the doing of God's will, the working of God's love, through the Son, in all the provinces of existence. No individual may blamelessly withdraw a single faculty of mind or power of body from the service of this kingdom; no Church on earth has any right specially to identify its claims with those of this kingdom; no state or government on earth ought to dare to separate itself from, or assert independence of, this kingdom. The King of it is Lord over all,—King of kings,—Prince of the kings of the earth,—entitled to wear on His brow all the crowns of the universe. Most foolish are they who, whatever be the department of thought or action, of life or work, in which they are engaged, venture to say that within it "they will not have



this Man to rule over them." He has a right to rule everywhere, and in the end will rule everywhere. No opposition, no resistance, will in the long-run avail to set His rule aside. His rule is the law of the universe; and every man, every Church, every nation, must be tried by it and judged by it. All who have reigned in this world—all who have exerted power and influence over others—must appear before His tribunal, to be condemned if they have disobeyed Him, and to be approved if they have served Him. Cæsar, to whom in the days of His humiliation He paid tribute; Caiaphas, in whose presence He was buffeted; and Pilate, who basely handed Him over to death,—will be there. Every hostile potentate, and every friendly potentate, will be there; every rebellious subject, and every loyal subject, will be there. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

It is a solemn thought, and yet a most consoling and encouraging thought, that Christ is thus "Prince of the kings of the earth." There are times when men are tempted to believe that physical force, or human arbitrariness, craft, and ambition, rule the world,—that there is nothing more powerful than the wills of monarchs, and the schemes of politicians, and the passions of the peoples,—that Providence is always on the side of full treasuries, and big battalions, and the subtlest brains—or that if there be a Divine Providence beneath these things, it is stern, retributive, vindictive, indifferent to the fates of individuals, without sympathy for our sufferings or sorrows. But the suspicion is a false one. That which is deepest in the universe, the text lets us know, is the truth, the eternal truth, to which Christ came to bear witness, and which He could declare Himself to be. He who is on the throne of the universe is He who, in infinite compassion, gave Himself to death for us, but who has risen again and now reigneth for evermore: the principles manifested in His character, and proclaimed in His Gospel, are the true laws of the universe. Whatever may appear to the contrary,

chance, force, unbending and un pitying fate, human caprice and human selfishness, justice exclusive of affection, and retribution which has its end in itself, so far from being what is mightiest in the government of the universe, are illusions and abstractions, or merely secondary and instrumental agencies, or are limited and restricted in their range of action ; while the absolute beginning, controlling power, and final purpose of that government are only to be found in the truth which comprehends perfect wisdom, perfect righteousness, and perfect love—the truth embodied and exhibited in Christ. This it is which underlies the world, determines its history, and is the goal to which it is moving ; on this hang the whole heavens and the whole earth : and therefore may we be assured that, however dark and perplexed things may at times seem, they will not fail to be guided to a right, and gracious, and holy issue. “Truth is great, and it will prevail.” Oh what an increase of meaning, of confirmation, and of efficacy does this ancient adage obtain, when the truth is identified with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is known to be the Ruler of the universe ! Who that adequately realises this can faint or fail ? Does it not imply that every noble cause, be it of liberty, or truth, or religion, must conquer in the end, since those who struggle for it are on the side of the King of kings ?

The value of this truth of Christ’s kingship our forefathers knew well. The glory of it shone with dazzling brightness before the eyes of the heroes and martyrs of the Covenants, sustaining them under their sufferings and inspiring them in their struggles. It is this which, above all else, gives to their history its imperishable attractiveness and its imperishable worth. But I greatly fear that in later times, through confused and wearisome controversies, we have wellnigh reasoned ourselves out of the faith in which they lived and died ; for many in Scotland seem to have come to think that outside of the Church secularism is the true theory of things, and not a few appear to fancy that the sovereignty of Christ is only a something which may be pleaded to secure ecclesiastical arbitrariness from review and ecclesiastical arrogance from restraint. Oh that we would cast off the narrow formulas of recent strifes, the distinctive shibboleths of our immediate

past, and that we would apprehend, in its natural breadth and fulness, the glorious certitude that, although Christ can never condescend to be a king of the earth, He cannot but be, in virtue of His absolute truth, righteousness, and goodness, the Ruler of all the kings of the earth! Oh that, with faith in this truth as firm as that of our forefathers, and with greater patience, greater charity, and the greater light in some respects of modern times, we were all of us—the highest and the humblest, clergy and laity, men and women—to act on it in our various spheres of life and work, by trying to make what of Scotland we can influence really and thoroughly a part of Christ's kingdom! Were we so to do, many a martyr's prophecy, sealed in blood, to the effect that the Covenants would be Scotland's revival, would yet meet with substantial fulfilment.

“Prince of the kings of the earth” is the greatest of the titles which the text assigns to our Lord, and the lesson which flows from it is the most comprehensive. He who has universal sway claims a universal obedience. He demands from every individual, every household, every society, every Church, every nation, a strict and steady conformity to the truth and justice, the purity and sanctity, the benevolence and beneficence, which are the laws of His kingdom. What He demands may we all rejoice to give. Soul and body—heart and life—every energy and every affection—let us sincerely, lovingly, and completely give.

I have sought simply to explain my text. I have wished to say nothing except what it says. I know well that I have expressed merely a small part of what it means. What is most essential in it, however, lies on the very surface.

The text assigns three glorious titles to our Lord, from which three great lessons plainly follow. He is “the faithful witness;” therefore let us hear His voice, accept His testimony, and receive His revelation of the Father. He is “the firstborn from the dead;” therefore let us, through communion with Him, rise with Him and live with Him. He is “the Prince of the kings of the earth;” therefore let us carefully keep His laws, labour faithfully as His servants, and fight manfully as His soldiers. May the Lord seal by His grace these lessons on our hearts! Amen.

## V.

### “THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S.”<sup>1</sup>

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”—GEN. i. 1.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein: for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.”—PSALM xxiv. 1, 2.

THE best of God’s gifts are often those which are least valued. We are apt to be unthankful to Him for such things as the light of the sun, water and air, our daily bread and nightly rest, for no other reason than that they are so common. But why are they so common? Only because they are so precious that God, in His kindness, puts, and has always been putting, all His children in possession of them. They are common because men could not live without them, or could only live in misery. If familiarity with them has unfortunately bred in us contempt for them, it is the very extent of God’s liberality to us which has been the occasion of our ingratitude to Him.

It is quite the same with truths as it is with things. Whenever a truth becomes very common—whenever, that is to say, it is put by Divine Providence into the minds of all—we begin to neglect it, and to forget that God should be praised for it. When we hear of some new and marvellous discovery of science, or of some of those magnificent practical applications of science which form so characteristic a feature of the present age, we stand rapt in wonder and adoration. “Glory to God in the highest,” is the spontaneous utterance of our souls. But at the same time we may forget, or fail to appreciate, old truths far more precious, perhaps, than the grandest discoveries of modern science, and far more useful than its happiest applications.

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the East Church, Aberdeen, on Sabbath, September 18, 1859, and published by request of Members of Committee of the British Association.

Now, it is right to give all honour to those who discover new truths. Honour to those whom God has made honourable: and God has certainly done high honour to a man when He allows him, first among all the children of men, to look with clear vision on any great law that has been operating from the creation, but of which intellect has not been able hitherto to take any account. God has made a new revelation of Himself to that man, and he may well feel that he is in a sense God’s prophet to his fellow-men, and we may well be grateful for the gift which God has made to us in him, and in the truth revealed to us through him. But neither he nor we should forget that there have been prophets before him with still more precious messages to mankind than any which science can now disclose; and that the grandest physical discoveries—those which most largely extend man’s power over the material world—do not equal in importance some of those old and familiar truths which yield direct and immediate guidance to the spiritual life, which throw a clear light on the mysteries of our own destinies, or tell us with precision the duties of each day as it arises.

It is to one of those old and familiar yet pre-eminently useful truths that I wish to direct your attention at this time, not with any view to prove it, for probably none of you doubt or deny it, but with a view to helping you to feel in due measure the value of it, which probably most of you are far from doing.

No one of us is ignorant of it. We have all known it from our infancy. We cannot tell when we heard it for the first time. From the earliest dawn of reason in us we were taught that God made us; that a wise and holy Being, who loves us, was our Creator, and the author of all that exists. And what we were taught we believed, and still believe. However many of our early beliefs we may have outgrown and cast off, there are few of us who have been so unhappy as to lose, so unwise as to reject, that precious portion of our childhood’s faith, a belief in the sacred and ennobling truth that “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,”—that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

But while we may all know and believe this truth, nothing is more likely than that owing to its very commonness and our familiarity with it, we may realise most inadequately the worth of it, and feel very little of that gratitude to God for the revelation of it which we ought to feel. Therefore it is that I wish to speak to you of its worth and its uses.

It is not even yet a truth known to all the peoples of the earth. It was once unknown, or almost unknown, on earth. It is not a truth which any man if left to himself would be sure, or even likely, to find out. Millions have lived and died without finding it out; millions are still living and dying in ignorance of it. Men as able as the ablest of those who are living on the earth in the present day have sought for it, grasped and striven after it, amidst the darkness, and yet not been blessed with its light. There have been great men—giants in the intellectual world—men whose names and memories scholars and thinkers still, after the lapse of many centuries, cherish and venerate as those of their profoundest and most stimulating teachers; and yet powerful as those men were in intellect, and noble as they were in heart, they failed, with all their painful and anxious searchings, to attain to a clear knowledge of God as the alone Creator and Lord of nature.

The world owes such knowledge, not exclusively indeed, but mainly, yea, almost entirely to God's education of the Hebrew people and His inspiration of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, or, in other words, to that revelation of Himself of which we have the product and expression in the Old Testament.

But think how much the world thus owes, how vast its indebtedness, from what a host of errors such knowledge has freed it, what a flood of light it has let in upon it, what life, and strength, and hope, it has brought to it.

Whatever man or nation has learned to know that the heavens and the earth are the creatures and subjects of God, is thereby necessarily delivered from all the errors of polytheism, from bondage to false gods, from the debasing worship of idols, from the intellectual and moral darkness of heathendom. On that man and nation a great light has arisen, a terrible night, filled with hideous spectres and haunting fears, has passed

away, and a serene day shines. They can walk with the freedom, the safety, the joyousness, of those who are in the light. They see that in nature there is nothing to deify, and yet that nature is full of Divine life and energy, of Divine beauty and goodness. They are strong in the Lord the true God, and so tremble not nor grovel before any other gods or lords.

It is also only through realising the truth affirmed in our texts that the chief and most dangerous forms of false speculation are deprived of their power to seduce, ensnare, and destroy. He who believes in God as the Creator and ruler of the universe can be neither atheist, materialist, nor pantheist. His faith is directly antagonistic to that of those who suppose that there is no God; that matter explains itself, and that there is nothing else; or that some indeterminate substance or impersonal force has originated all that exists. The only sure protection against any error is possession of the truth which contradicts it; the only sure preservative against the power of those imposing systems of error to which I refer, and from the consequences which they involve, and which must be so inevitably ruinous to the moral life alike of individuals and of societies, is a firm, well-grounded, carefully tested faith in the truth which is so plainly laid down in the first verse of our Bibles.

Then, this faith in God as the Creator is the necessary basis of all higher spiritual faith. It is only in virtue of so believing in God that we can also believe in Him as a Heavenly Father, as one who reveals Himself in the soul of man, in the history of the world, in the experiences of the pious. He cannot be a Christian who is not a Theist. The Christian faith,—faith in the love and mercy, salvation and kingdom of God, as revealed through the teaching and work of Christ,—could have been built on no other foundation than on that knowledge of God as the Creator and Lord of the Universe into which ancient Israel was divinely guided and educated to the benefit and blessing of all the nations of the earth.

I do not wish to dwell longer, however, on such aspects of the truth under consideration as those just indicated, important although they be. Nor shall I attempt at all to show how in this truth alone scientific and philosophic inquiry and thought

can find unity and self-consistency, rest and satisfaction, although this also might be made to appear a very good and evident reason for our highly valuing it.

In what remains to be said I shall confine myself to pointing out how knowledge of the truth in question ought so to affect our mode of contemplating the universe, of viewing nature, as to make the universe a source of spiritual discipline and improvement to us, as to make nature religiously helpful to us.

This is not a small matter. It is possible, indeed, to expect in this respect too much from nature. There are some who seem to think that if the spirits of our pent-up, toil-worn, city workmen could only be brought into frequent contact with the clear skies and green fields most defects and diseases of their souls would be remedied and healed. They seem to think that nature might serve to them as a substitute for the Gospel. This, of course, is foolishness. Those who think so forget both the natural darkness and the natural depravity of the human heart. They overlook that although nature may in some degree lead us to look aright on the Gospel, the Gospel is in a far higher degree needed to enable us to look aright upon nature. Pure eyes and Christian hearts can alone apprehend the heavenly truths which the book of creation imparts.

But there is a contrary and more prevalent error. It is the undue depreciation of nature. It is the forgetting that it has spiritual uses at all; that it is meant to have any real function in our religious education. There are many, it is to be feared, who thus err; who think and act frequently or habitually as if the universe were but a stall for provender—a place for the supply of our physical wants; who never realise that it too is a revelation, and that if Nature be not complete without the Gospel, neither is the Gospel complete without Nature. But, surely, this glorious universe was never made merely to satisfy the lower or animal needs of our souls, to fill us with food when hungry, with drink when thirsty, and the like. And indeed, if in truth, as our texts assert, God's creation, God's universe, it must be also the manifestation of God, and address itself to what is highest, divinest, most spiritual in us.

A few brief remarks may help you to realise this.



In the first place, then, the world, being recognised to be the work and manifestation of God, is necessarily invested with a deep religious awe, a solemn religious significance.

You are aware what an important fact in the Christian system is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of true believers; what an encouragement and incentive it is to keep your hearts pure and holy, and to present your bodies unto God as a living sacrifice, acceptable and undefiled. It is its final, its crowning truth; a fact which gives it an immeasurable superiority over every previous revelation of God made to the patriarchs and prophets; an inexhaustible source of virtue and holiness.

But what this truth does for the Gospel, the fact that “the earth is the Lord’s” does for religion in general. God’s presence with Nature causes the Christian to regard it with religious feelings, less deep perhaps, but essentially the same in kind, as the Spirit’s presence with all saints makes him look upon his own body. The emotion in the former case is not so powerful, but its objects are innumerable and boundless. In the latter case it is stronger, but the objects are fewer and limited. The presence of the Third Person of the Trinity to our hearts ought not, however, to make us forget the presence of the First Person to all things. Nay, we may venture to say, that if the truth that “the earth is the Lord’s” will not make Nature solemn and sacred to us, we shall be unmoved by the other truth, that we are a peculiar people in Christ Jesus, through the indwelling of the Spirit.

It is impossible for a rightly-constituted heart to feel the close connection of all things with the invisible and almighty God, and yet not look upon them as bound to be consecrated only to noble uses. The very thought changes at once the universe into a great temple for praise and worship of the Eternal, and all the bounties of Nature into gifts to be laid upon His altar. This is surely no small matter, but the one all-important matter. It is just religion brought really into all that we do. It is just life made a long act of worship; the meanest things among which we move made sacred; so that the very stones of the street and the trees of the field witness to us about God.

In the second place, the fact that "the earth is the Lord's" is a source of pure and holy joy, from which we may draw whenever we look upon anything in Nature that is fair and well fitted to fulfil the end of its creation.

When a man looks upon the fields in autumn, laden with yellow grain rich and ripe for the harvest, he cannot help feeling the beauty and pleasantness of the sight; and when he thinks how many mouths they will fill with food and gladness throughout the land, he must be cold-hearted indeed if he does not feel gratified by reflecting on the amount of happiness that will thus be diffused among his fellow-men. All this, however, a man might feel without any knowledge of the truth that God is the Creator and Lord of all things; but teach him so, and not only will he feel all that I have just said, but over and above, he will see in these harvest-fields a sign of the wondrous love which the Father in Heaven bears to even the humblest of His children on earth. He will learn to trace out in all the visible forms of creation the glorious character of their invisible Author and Possessor. All that is lovely in earth and heaven will be felt more lovely still, because it speaks of a beauty and perfection lying beyond the range of the eye of flesh, but within the range of faith—a beauty and perfection infinite and inexpressible.

Thus the religious man—the man who practically and abidingly realises the truth of my text—sees in Nature more than any other man. The knowledge that God is its Creator and Lord raises him far above itself. It makes the earth one great symbol of heaven—the visible of the invisible. It brings the human mind into contact with an infinitely higher and better world. The godless man, the religiously indifferent man, sees no more than half of what the godly man sees; and that half is certainly the lowest and least valuable half. In this respect the godly man alone is a complete, an entire man; the godless man is but half a man.

The importance of this truth cannot be over-estimated. It shows that we need not abandon the pursuits of ordinary life to enjoy the delights of a religious life. It shows that all that we need is a vivid, lasting, operative feeling—a steady, practical conviction—of the connection between heaven and

earth; a true appreciation of the meaning and bearing of the opening verse in our Bibles.

The man of science is not asked, for instance, to turn away from those special investigations which are engrossing his attention, and to engage in a perfectly distinct order of contemplations unrelated to the matters he has in hand. He is simply asked to observe and to investigate in his own special department with a fully awakened nature—to let his religious susceptibilities have free play about what he is doing; and his special investigations, being thus consecrated, will of themselves train and educate him for the duties and delights of the heavenly life.

Not only does the truth that “the earth and its fulness, the world and all that are therein,” are the Lord’s, extend the range of our thoughts and enjoyments; it also heightens the value of those that are common to the whole race. It makes us bear a deeper and truer love to all God’s creatures. The fact that they are His creatures will do more than merely prevent us from using them with harshness and cruelty. It will give them an interest in our eyes, and make them objects of delightful contemplation. It will make us begin to look upon all Nature with eyes of thoughtfulness and love. It will of necessity constrain us to say—

“He prayeth best who loveth best  
 All things, both great and small;  
 For the dear God who loveth us,  
 He made and loveth all.”

Thirdly, by thus sending men to Nature as well as to Scripture for their religion, our texts tend to give breadth and freedom to the religious character.

This is what many sincerely good men sadly want. It is often impossible not to recognise their genuine earnestness and spirituality of mind, when we are greatly repelled by their austerities and their narrowness of view. They obviously breathe in the midst of a vitiated atmosphere. There is disease about their very goodness.

Now, when you turn away from the biography of such a man, or from listening to his conversation, and read such a

psalm as that read this forenoon—the 104th Psalm—you see into the whole mystery of the disease. There is a great and felt difference. You have come from the company of one who thinks Religion is the denial of Nature, into the company of one who thinks it elevates and perfects Nature. You feel that here, where you are now, there beats a heart pious and spiritual indeed, but also of a large and genial humanity, and delighting in all natural beauty and excellence.

There is nothing artificial or exclusive, nothing making the life rigid and austere, unsociable or ungenial, in such piety, however deep or fervent it may be: whereas it is impossible to describe how much hardness and austerity and sickliness is given to the religious character by making the Bible alone—the Bible arbitrarily severed from Nature and life—the Bible most unbiblically used—the sole source of spiritual growth.

I would then, most emphatically, that men would think on the Gospel not less, but on Nature more. There can be no breadth, no geniality otherwise; no childlike simplicity, no readiness to receive all truly Divine impressions. The influences of Nature are constantly needed to keep alive those feelings of admiration, hope, and love, which enter so largely into spiritual life.

Again, and fourthly, only through realising our relation to Nature as God's creation, God's work, can we realise our relation to God Himself. Through realising its grandeur, for example, we have the feeling of our own insignificancy forced upon us in the most impressive way not only in relation to it, but also, and still more, in relation to its Author. You will remember how vividly the Psalmist has described this feeling as springing up within him on the contemplation of Nature's magnificence. "When I consider," he says in the 8th Psalm—"when I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

And in the very psalm from which I have chosen one of my texts, immediately after the words, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein: for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods," he exclaims, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the

Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?” which is almost the same thought; the only difference being that instead of asking, “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” he here asks, what is man, or the son of man, that he should be permitted to draw near unto Thee, and worship in Thy great and holy presence.

If the psalmists of Israel with their imperfect knowledge of the greatness of the earth, and their far more imperfect knowledge of the immensity of the heavens, thus felt, how much more ought we so to feel, whose knowledge of the vastness and the wonderfulness of the universe the discoveries of science have so exceedingly enlarged?

Finally, if we really accept what the texts teach us; if we believe God to be the Creator of the heaven and the earth, the rightful Lord of the earth and its fulness, of the world and them that dwell therein; then are we obviously bound to acknowledge that we owe all to Him, and can hold nothing as strictly and entirely our own, no foot of land, no penny of our wealth, no hour of our time, no faculty or exercise of body or mind, as independent of His will or exempt from His service.

If these texts be true—and reason and conscience honestly questioned will not refuse to testify to their truth—it is impossible for a man to hold anything justly as his absolute property; by no price or labour even can you purchase an absolute right to anything. If you believe or say that because you have inherited an estate, or even because you have bought it with the wealth which you have earned by the hardest labour of body or of mind, therefore it is *yours* to do with it as you please, or that you are anything more than the steward of it, you contradict most directly the truth that “the earth and its fulness are the Lord’s.” You say that they are *yours*, not *His*. If a State law or a political economist encourage you in your opinion, it is none the less false. God is, strictly speaking, the sole proprietor in the universe. He made “the earth and its fulness,” and allows us to enjoy them as stewards—“to occupy until He come.” We are not at liberty to use anything for our own purposes. Everything must be employed for the common good of all, for the greatest glory of God.

We have not even an absolute right to ourselves. It is not

only "the world," but "they who dwell therein" that are the Lord's. He is our Creator, and we are bound to work out, by every power and energy of our nature, the will of God in our creation. We are bound to sacrifice life itself in His service, if that be needed. Should I see before me some great work which I can perform to my race, but only by over-exerting every physical and mental energy, so that if I do it I must sink prematurely into the grave; still, if the work be of higher value than anything else I can do for my fellow-men with my life, then am I morally bound to sacrifice that life, however pleasant and dear it may be to me. We are not our own; we are the Lord's; and the law of our lives can be no other than His holy will—that will which we daily pray may be done in heaven and in earth. Let us live as we pray. Let us see to it that that will is done in us and by us. Let us strive that our wills never contradict but ever faithfully obey that sovereign will. God grant us through the strengthening of His Holy Spirit to succeed in this striving. And to His name be the glory, now and evermore. Amen.

## VI.

### CLAIMS OF DIVINE WISDOM ON YOUNG MEN.<sup>1</sup>

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.”

—PROVERBS iv. 26.

THESE words tell us that we should not pass through life without serious reflection on what life is and what it means; on what its duties are, and what its issues are likely to be; but that we should carefully consider how we may make the most of the great gift of life which God has bestowed upon us, and may so live as that God, and the reasons and consciences within us which testify of God and for God, will approve of our lives. They tell us what a multitude of other verses in the book from which they are taken also tell us. Indeed the great aim of the Book of Proverbs is to commend religious thoughtfulness. It is a book written in praise of wisdom, or of moral and religious good sense, as that “the merchandise of which is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold;” and to which all the things that can be desired are not to be compared. Its burden is, “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not: . . . forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” Such is the advice which is given us, in substance, in verse after verse, from the beginning to the end of the book, as well as in our text.

It is advice which should not come amiss to any of us—which we all need to lay to heart—for it reminds us of a duty which lies upon every one of us at every moment, which concerns our whole conduct, which is broad as the moral law and our moral life, which we cannot neglect without

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the Bute Hall before the students of Glasgow University, and published by request.

sin, or without the shame and sorrow and suffering which follow on sin, and yet which we are all prone to forget or lightly to regard. At the same time, it is advice which certainly cannot be more appropriate to any among us than to those whom I wish to have particularly in view in what I say at this time. Young men do not need the advice less than older people, but rather the reverse. They have, as a rule, some precious qualities of disposition in which those more advanced in age are apt to be deficient, but thoughtfulness is not generally their strong point; the want of it is very frequently their weakest point. Then, not less but more depends on their choice of a path and on their giving heed to their feet. They have a wider choice of paths; they are freer and likelier to choose either the very best or the very worst path than those who have already gone a considerable way in some particular direction. Nowhere are wrong steps so dangerous or right steps so hopeful as at the outset of the journey of life. A little swerving from the true path and a few stumbles there, may make the whole course of a man's life a disastrous failure, terribly different from what it otherwise might have been, terribly different to himself and to all connected with him. God grant, therefore, that the words which I have to say to you young men this day may have some influence in leading you to accept heartily, and to act faithfully on, the exhortation in the text.

I do not need to explain it, for it is already as plain as words can make it. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." There is a right course in life, and there are many wrong courses,—there is a line of conduct which God approves of, and there are many which He condemns—one which leads to blessedness, and many which end in ruin; and what we are here told is, Choose thoughtfully among these ways, so different in themselves, and so different in their issues,—be careful to keep out of every wrong one,—take the right path, and see well that you remain in it,—let no temptation entice you away from it,—select your every step heedfully, so as not to stumble or fall. It is certainly plain and commonplace advice—"the instruction of a father, the law of a mother"—and yet who can doubt that thoroughly to



receive it would "give subtilty to the simple," and avail us more than silver or gold, power or fame, science or learning?

The text is as reasonable and practical as it is plain. It advises us to exercise just that wisdom which, as rational and moral beings, we are able and bound to exercise, and not such wisdom, or so-called wisdom, as may be beyond us. It does not say that we must know much, or that we must have much mental ability. God may have so placed us in life that our opportunities for acquiring knowledge are few, and He may have given us a moderate or small measure of talent. But what is here asked of us is merely to try to find out, in whatever circumstances we are placed, what our duty is, and how best to do it; to use what power of thought we have got in the choice and carrying out of such a life as our consciences tell us God demands: not knowledge, thought, ability, either absolutely in themselves or relatively to others, but simply knowledge about what concerns us as moral and responsible beings, to each of whom God has assigned work which we shall find it unspeakable praise and blessedness to do well, unspeakable shame and misery to do ill,—the thoughtfulness which ascertains what God's will as to duty is, and which prevents us taking any step that we have not His warrant for,—the ability to separate between good and evil, both in our inner life of feeling and our outer life of action. Such knowledge as this—the knowledge of God's will as to what use we ought to make of our own lives—no one of us can be excused for not possessing, since all of us are meant to acquiesce in and obey that will; such thoughtfulness as this is, through God's grace, beyond the attainment of no man who is anxious for it; such ability as this every man may get who sincerely seeks it from God, and earnestly strives to obtain and exercise it.

But while the exhortation of the text is thus reasonable and practical,—while it only demands what is not merely possible but clearly binding on us as intelligent and moral beings, responsible to God for the way in which we employ the life and powers He has given us,—it is none the less an exhortation to a duty which is far from natural or easy to us— an exhortation which is very much needed, both because the

duty of which it reminds us is extremely apt to be neglected, and because the neglect of it is exceedingly dangerous. There is no reason for thinking that the right path in life is one which a man can hardly miss, or one which it is the exception to be ignorant of or not found in. On the contrary, it is one path among many, and the narrowest of all—to the merely natural man and the will of the flesh, the least inviting of all, the one most apt to be overlooked, the one most frequently overlooked. It needs serious thought and careful pondering to select it; and unless a man feel how serious it must be to make a mistake as to the path, and unless he will pause and deliberate, consult his conscience, study his Bible, use his reason, prayerfully and honestly, in order to find out which path is the true one, he is certain to err. It is the getting into a wrong road which needs no thought, no pondering. To refrain from thought, to go on without pondering, to do as others do, to let chance or caprice, or pleasure or apparent self-interest decide us, is quite enough to carry us woefully astray.

Many thus act to their own grievous loss. Although spiritual thoughtfulness be the bounden duty of all, and the indispensable condition, the very root of all true piety, and even of all true manhood, it is yet a rare thing, which many are destitute of, which few exercise habitually and diligently, so that what ought to be our highest glory—the power of intelligent choice between good and evil, God and the world, life and death—is our deepest shame. People who are thoughtful and careful about everything else are often thoughtless and heedless about these, the really needful things. Those whose business it is, as it were, to study and think, to work with their minds, to search for truth, are often as devoid as others of this higher thoughtfulness. The scholar, the student of science, the student even, I fear, of the Bible and of theology; those, in a word, who engage with diligence and delight in the various kinds of speculation, inquiry, and learning, including even those kinds which touch most closely on the moral and spiritual life, have not unfrequently less of the practical thoughtfulness which consists in “pondering the path of their feet” than the peasant who

can scarcely read; and it is an error if any of us conclude because we have more education than is common, and really like to study and think, and spend much of our time in doing so, that we must, as a matter of course, have that wisdom which the least educated man may have. We may get much knowledge, and yet not get that understanding without which it will do us little good, and deservedly do us little good; since surely, let our powers of mind and knowledge be what they may, if all that gives to life its solemnity and significance be habitually lost sight of, our powers have been ill applied and our knowledge is a vanity, and the simplest man whose spirit God's Spirit has awakened to meditate on what concerns righteousness of life and eternal peace is worthy, even as regards intelligence, of far more respect than we. We may know many foreign languages, he not even his own; we many sciences, he none; but the root of true mental life, of true spiritual culture, is in him, and it is not in us; and he is the better educated man of the two, however the education may have been gained.

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” Is there a path where our feet may always move safely, and within which all our ways may be established? Yes; a glorious and blessed path—the one right path, in the resolute choice of which, and steadfast adherence to which, true wisdom mainly consists. What is this path? It is—conscience, reason, Scripture all tell us—the highest life we are, with the help of God's grace, capable of,—a life of intellectual truthfulness, of purity and elevation of feeling, of self-sacrificing love for the good of others, of zeal for the glory of God; in a word, the hatred and avoidance of all sin, and the love and practice of all righteousness from the noblest motives. Some such answer as this is all that natural reason in itself, and all perhaps that reason even enlightened by the Old Testament revelation, could give; and it is one which is perfectly true, although somewhat vague.

But in Christ it becomes as definite as it can be made. “I am the way,” says Christ. “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” Christ has brought near to us the love and mercy

of God through the sacrifice of Himself for the putting away of sin; He has shown us the example of a perfect life, perfect under suffering and perfect in action—a heart transparently pure and full of love to God and man—a mind always in a balance of truth, swayed by no excesses, running to no extremes—a will ever exercised in doing good—a character absolutely harmonious with itself and with the whole spiritual universe; and He has obtained for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the strength of Divine Grace, to lift us, as it were, out of our natural state of selfishness and sin, into that close, inner, loving contact with Himself which fills us with a new life, which gives us that communion with God which is eternal life. Life in Christ, and the life of Christ in us—life moulded on His example, life with His principles and aims, life originated, pervaded, enlightened, purified, swayed, strengthened, and developed by His Spirit—is true life, the only right way to eternal life, the one path which will take us thither.

This, then, is the path which God has opened up for you through Jesus Christ, and in which He invites and summons you to walk. This grand and beautiful style of life, far higher, far nobler, far more truly attractive to every eye really open to spiritual grandeur, truth, and beauty, than any king or prince on earth can live, if God does not raise them, too, to a higher than worldly life,—this life, I say, is the path in which He asks every one of you to walk. There is not one young man now hearing me, however mean his surroundings or ordinary his abilities, whom God has not judged worthy of a life far higher and better than any which nobles or sovereigns can live, using merely their worldly powers and resources. This is the equality between man and man which the Gospel sets forth—an equality distant from that of socialism as heaven from earth. The Gospel does not seek to deprive any of their earthly advantages, and reduce all to the same low worldly level, but it would raise all to so high a rank of life, that in the glory of the royal priesthood with which it clothes every true follower of Jesus, the greatest earthly distinctions will be seen to be insignificant.

Here then, young men, is the question which I am bound to press upon you—Will you take this path into which God in-

vites you, or will you be so thoughtless as to try some other? Will you choose that noblest kind of life which your Father in heaven would have you lead, the life of sonship—the very life which is in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ; or will you, from the falsest modesty—or rather through the most fatal want of self-respect—deem yourselves unworthy to receive what God does not deem it unworthy of Himself to offer you, and reject the unspeakable gift which would so enrich, ennoble, and bless you? What other path would you prefer to it? What other calling would please you better than this your high calling in Jesus Christ? Oh, surely you would not rather take the paths which some young men take,—those dark and foul paths of degrading indulgence, in following which men break their mothers' hearts, bring down the heads of their fathers with sorrow to the tomb, and cruelly wrong and injure their wives and children—in which all that distinguishes and honours human nature is lost and trampled in the mire—in which, as a man proceeds, he becomes increasingly debased even in his own eyes, until dead to shame, only because dead to goodness—in which he brings discredit on the class to which he belongs, and disgrace and misery on all connected with him—and at the end of which he finds only an unhonoured grave unillumined with the rays of hope? Surely you will never prefer any of these paths to the one in which God would have you to walk. And yet, my friends, human nature when it trusts only in itself is very weak, and the appetites and passions which prompt to evil are in many a young man's heart very strong, and difficult to restrain or guide; and the only way, therefore, to be secure against wandering into any of those foul paths, is to choose the path which is farthest away from them—the purest and best path through life—the one true path,—the path of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

I assume, however, that you will at least choose some path which is outwardly respectable, or, it may be, some path which will lead you to worldly success and distinction; and I wish you may get all worldly things really for your good in fullest measure. Yet I say that if, knowing as you do of the higher life to which God calls you, you are content with one of mere worldly respectability—that if, knowing as you do of the greater

blessings which He would have you strive to attain, you can be so untrue to yourselves and respond so ill to His thoughts towards you as to seek only worldly advantages,—you deserve to fail in your poor ambition—deserve to sink below respectability—deserve not to gain the object of your quest,—or deserve to experience how poor your ambition has been—how hollow and delusive mere worldly respectability is—how unsatisfactory mere worldly successes and distinctions are. And you will get what you deserve in the one way or the other.

Not a young man here, I trust, can be so deficient in intelligence as not to see, or so narrow in heart as not to feel, that a far higher and nobler life is possible to him than any merely worldly life—that the truly Divine life of which I spoke lays claim to him. It is generally only the old who have abused their lives, and grown stupid and callous and contracted in the service of the world, who cannot see or feel this. And if you can see and feel it, you are certainly bound to choose resolutely this highest life—the Divine life. It is folly to choose anything lower. Thank God that He has called you to so high a destiny, and close joyously with His call. Realise your own worth in the light of it. Have due respect to your own dignity in the light of it. The best is the best: choose not below the best, when all below it is infinitely below it, and when by choosing it all lower good will be added unto you, and from all lower things you will be able to extract their utmost good. A celebrated modern Italian—the late Joseph Mazzini—was never weary of crying to the young men of Italy, “Young men, cherish high ideals.” This day my whole wish would be to persuade you young men before me that your only true wisdom lies in cherishing the highest ideal you can form—in taking it into your mind and heart—in devoting all your powers to express it in your conduct. But the highest ideal of life conceivable has been already completely realised. Jesus Christ has shown us the perfect type of Divine life in human nature—the perfect manifestation and embodiment of Divine love, goodness, and holiness. Therefore, if we would walk in the true path and have all our ways established, we must continually study His life, grow in the knowledge of His excellences, appropriate the features of His character, and

follow in His footsteps. It may be well to study the lives of others who have been eminent for virtues and achievements; but here, again, let us not forget that the best is the best,—that Jesus alone presents us with a perfect example—that the Christian life is essentially the imitation, the reproduction, of the life of Christ.

I must not forget, however, that we are living in days when no one addressing an audience of educated young men can safely assume that there are not some of them far from prepared to admit the Divinity and Divine Mission of Jesus Christ—and far from prepared, therefore, to seek in His life, doctrine, and grace the true life necessary to every human soul, enlightenment as to the right path of human conduct, and strength to proceed in it. Some of you, it may be, have the most radical doubts as to Christianity. So be it. Although I have no time to consider how you may have come to your doubts, or what may be the worth of the grounds on which you would be prepared to defend them, I have a word to you also.

There are some things which, happily, you cannot very easily doubt. You can no more doubt, for instance, the testimony of your consciences than you can doubt the testimony of your eyesight. You can no more help distinguishing between right and wrong—can no more help approving of generosity, truthfulness, justice, purity, and condemning selfishness, lying, injustice, and impurity—than you can help distinguishing between light and darkness, and preferring one kind of colouring to another. It matters not how your conscience may have come to you, or how it may have been formed in your race, any more than how vision originated and has been developed. The inner sense, in whatever way accounted for, is as credible as the outer sense, and you can quite as reasonably doubt or disbelieve your eyes as your consciences, within their respective provinces. You simply cannot refuse to believe the voice of conscience without being condemned by your conscience and feeling degraded.

Well, let this conscience scrutinise and judge your own moral lives. It is what it ought to do. It is its appropriate function and work within you. Under the gaze, then, of an honest conscience, do you think your heart and conduct at all

what they ought to be, or are you quite well aware that they are terribly the reverse of what they ought to be? Ah! there can be no doubt as to what the answer should be; no doubt that, unless strangely devoid of moral susceptibility and earnestness, your own hearts will condemn you, testifying that your will as regards good is weak and perverse, your affections disordered and diseased, your passions selfish and lawless, your nature corrupt to a lamentable extent. It is not very long ago since those who were then deemed advanced thinkers were wont to teach that all men were born good, and might, if they had only been rightly educated, have been kept good. Darwinism, and a little knowledge of the laws of heredity, have quite discredited that nonsense. Now, our advanced thinkers tell us that we inherit not only the faulty qualities of the first men, but the gross appetites and passions of an older and brutal ancestry. Be that so or not, your own moral experience, honestly consulted, will not fail soon to convince you that your natures, far from spontaneously conforming themselves, as they ought, to the requirements of the moral law, show themselves deeply estranged from it, and possessed by tendencies which lead it incessantly to the most inexcusable disobedience to its requirements.

Now, let the eye of conscience turn from resting on your own actual moral life to that which is set forth in the New Testament as exhibited by Christ, and enjoined by Him on His followers. You may refuse to assume, or even to admit, that Christ ever lived; but you cannot push your scepticism so far as to deny that there is such a book as the New Testament, and that in it there is a picture drawn of one claiming to be a Saviour and to reveal to man the true way of life. Well, let your consciences examine the life exhibited and prescribed,—let them search and try the principles, the motives, the ends of it; let them see if they can find any fault there; let them honestly say whether it be the true life of man or not. I am convinced that, if sincere and candid, they will not dare to deny that it is in very deed the only life worthy of a man. The conscience, brought into the presence of that light, must pronounce it to be the light which can alone be the life of men.



Conscience then, it seems, certainly pronounces the life which you must lead if left to yourselves an evil one, and cannot refuse to acknowledge that the ideal of life associated with the name of Christ is an infinitely higher one—yea, the only true one. If you find this so, as I am sure you will if you only inquire aright, it will then be for you to consider how you will live as you know you ought to do, if, as you suspect, Christ either were not, or not what He claimed to be. The first and greatest of questions for each one of you is, How are you to be a truly good man? How you are to overcome the evil in your heart and the temptations in the world, and to attain to the purity, truth, and sanctity which the moral law demands? Every other question ought to be postponed to this. All doubts as to religion which are of a merely intellectual or speculative character can reasonably be considered only after this directly and intensely practical and moral question has been seriously dealt with—How, being such men as we are, are we to become such men as we ought to be? In the Gospel of Christ there is an answer given in comparison with which any other which has ever been suggested can hardly fail to appear to a morally awakened and earnest mind wretchedly inadequate. Thus, the man who is truly aware of his own spiritual condition, of his own sinfulness and moral weakness, and who at the same time contemplates Christ as set forth in the Gospel, may be expected to feel Christ necessary to him; that without Christ he cannot live, and without Christ he dare not die; that only in such an one as Christ can be found the purity, enlightenment, strength, and peace which he needs.

But some person may say, That such an one as Christ is necessary to me is no proof that there ever was such an one as Christ,—no proof that the claims which He is represented to have made were made by Him, or that if made they were true. I quite admit that, but he who says so must also admit that these claims being what they are represented to have been—being that Christ is the only Saviour from sin, and can alone show the true path of life, and alone enable men to follow it—they have an immense and immediate practical interest for him, and he is bound to examine them under the

deepest sense of moral responsibility and of personal concern. Now this, it seems to me, is a point of momentous importance.

We constantly hear of young men having had their faith shaken by, for example, some metaphysical theory of the limits of knowledge, or some scientific or so-called scientific theory of evolution, or certain critical investigations into the origin and composition of books of Scripture, or some ingenious speculation as to the credibility of miracles, &c.; and it may be that we are asked to indicate how the doubts which have thus been raised should be dealt with. In the vast majority of cases it is, I believe, comparatively useless to deal with them directly, because they have mainly risen from there having been no real faith in Christ, or even serious and reasonable consideration of Christ's claims, to start with. I do not see that much direct good is likely to come from controverting such doubts as these, if the doubters have no due sense of what Christ claims to be, and of the relationship especially which He claims to hold to their own souls. If you realise in some fitting measure your own condition as a sinner, and seriously consider how the Gospel responds to your wants as a sinner, then, but only then, can I entertain a good hope that you will see that Christ stands in an altogether exceptional, yea, unique relation to you; that from that you may be able to appreciate the uniqueness of His position in the history of revelation, in the history of religion, in the history of humanity, and in the system of the universe; and so that, from the centre outwards, miracles and prophecies, histories and Scriptures, and even theories of evolution and the pretensions of Agnosticism, may appear in a new light, and your doubts, drawn from the far-off regions of speculation or from difficult critical investigations, vanish away.

What I would insist on is, that you begin your inquiry with what is nearest to you and most certain—with self-knowledge honestly obtained—and then, that with that you go directly to the contemplation of Christ Himself and to the consideration of His claims to be your Saviour, before you undertake to judge of Him by the speculations of Hume or Spencer or Haeckel, or even by the attempted defences of Him by Christian Apologists. Christ addresses Himself to those who

feel the misery, the burden, the guilt of sin; and a man who does not feel these things cannot be converted to faith in Christ by any mere processes of logic. From the very nature of Christ's claims they must, in order to be profitably dealt with, be treated not as objects of pure intellectual controversy, but of earnest moral inquiry. Where, however, there is a deep sense of responsibility and a real eagerness for the true way of life, there may we confidently trust that His highest claims will be found to be amply warranted, and that He will satisfy the intellect not less fully than He does the heart.

I should now speak of the characteristics of the true and living way in which we are called by Christ to walk, and of the means which He has provided to enable us to walk therein; but time forbids me even to touch on these great themes. One other thing, however, must be said—for without attention to it all else that has been said will be useless. It is, that we can neither reasonably hope to ponder aright the path of our feet, nor to have our ways established—neither reasonably hope to get into the right path nor to keep in it—if we trust merely in our own wisdom and our own strength. We must place our dependence in a higher wisdom and a greater strength; we must seek the enlightenment and the power which the Spirit of God alone imparts. While carefully using our own reasons, we must also have the Divine light shining on them; while sparing no effort we can ourselves make, we must likewise lean humbly on the arm of the Lord. “A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps,” we read in the Book of Proverbs. “The steps of a good man,” says the Psalmist, “are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way.” “I know, O Lord,” exclaims Jeremiah,—“I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” One of the greatest and most blessed truths taught us in the Gospel is, that now the Holy Ghost has been fully given, both to lead us into the true path of life, and to enable us to abide in it; and we shall make a fatal mistake if we overlook this fact, and try to do without the Spirit's aid.

To take the right path, we must rise above what is merely natural in us, and resist much that is most natural to us; we must turn from the folly, the self-will, the love of pleasure, the

love of praise, the avarice, the ambition, the worldliness, which inhere in us and beset us: we must quite turn away from them, and fix our eyes and bend our steps in the opposite direction; we must feel the things we have hitherto been blind to, nearer us, and more sure than what our fingers can grasp—realise the powers of the world to come, deny ourselves, and seek our lives not in ourselves nor in the world, but in Christ. Now assuredly, flesh and blood, mere self-will and natural feeling, are not likely to bring us into such a way as this; and yet it is the new and living way. On the contrary, to enter it we must renounce flesh and blood, mere will and feeling, and have regard only to the real truth of things. If we do not seriously use our reasons to discover that—if we do not yield them to the guidance of Divine Wisdom, and follow where it leads,—our passions, our pleasures, our interests, are sure to entice and draw us into some other path. Reason alone, and reason only, when guided by the Spirit of God, when seeing and judging in the light which is from above, will observe the true path, and pronounce it to be the true one.

Even if, by some strange chance, we were to get into the true path without the Spirit's aid, we could not keep in it without His constant help, as we may easily convince ourselves by thinking for a moment of the great number and great power of the influences or forces which are constantly exerting their strength to draw us out of it. There are the senses, and that whole world of sense which is their object, constantly tending to engross our attention to themselves, to make us unable to think about or believe in what we cannot see or handle—unable to feel how awfully real are God and Christ, sin and holiness, heaven and hell. There are all our appetites and passions, requiring to be incessantly watched and strictly controlled, in order that they may not degrade and brutalise the best of us. There are the innumerable cares and demands of daily business, which make so many men slaves and drudges, who sacrifice to business all the powers of their manhood, so that they have none to give to God, the soul, the world to come. There are the pleasures of life, crowding our higher and middle classes especially with swarms of trifling and superficial creatures, devoid of the very idea that God made man or woman for any

worthy end at all, devoid of thought, devoid of self-restraint or regulated feeling, devoid of earnestness. There is surely need, great need, of a thoughtful pondering of what we do when things like these are constantly assailing us in order to make us act foolishly and wrongly, and especially as, our own hearts being evil,—yes, very evil even when converted,—we are so inclined of ourselves to yield to them. Surely we need to pray for a new heart as the condition and source of an understanding mind; surely we greatly need to listen to the word of St James, this wise injunction followed by a precious promise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him;” surely we shall do well to remember that “the God of Israel is He who giveth strength unto His people;” surely we may ardently desire to be filled with the Holy Ghost, to be enlightened, purified, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

My message to you is ended. I have sought to give you not merely *good* advice, but the *best* advice. May you accept it and act on it. And may God so bless it, and so bless and guide and keep all of you, that all the duties and trials, joys and sorrows, changes and events which await you, will only bring you nearer to His own immediate presence, and only increasingly enrich you with that eternal life which is in Him. Amen.

## VII.

### THE CHIEF GOOD.<sup>1</sup>

“There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.”—PSALM iv. 6.

THE subject of my address is one which many philosophers have discussed. But the only observations regarding it which I shall submit to you will be of a very simple kind, and they will also be as practical as I can make them.

A Catechism, which I hope may be long familiar to Scottish young men, begins with the question, What is the chief end of man? It is a question of a kind which I suppose man alone of all the creatures on the earth asks. The other animals fulfil their ends without thinking of what these are; and, impelled by their particular instincts and appetites, they fulfil them as a rule much better than we do ours, and almost as well as inanimate objects and mechanical forces accomplish theirs. Watch a flock of sea-gulls plying their vocations from morning till night with the energy which characterises them, and you may almost feel inclined to agree with the Greek sceptic Carneades, who argued that reason was a baneful gift which our race would have been much better without. Certainly if men were all as active as those creatures are it would be much better both for themselves and their fellows. And I suspect that the advice, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise,” may apply to many of us who would resent being pronounced either indolent or improvident.

Yet reason is a glorious gift of God. By the possession of it man is raised far above the other creatures of the earth, although in virtue of the possession of it he may err and degrade himself as they never do. It is by the exercise of it that he is man; and wherever the creature called man is truly man he asks himself in some form, What is my being's

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered in the Mitchell Hall, to the Students of Aberdeen University, on Sabbath evening, February 9, 1896.

end and aim? What should I seek and what ought I to avoid? What is evil for me, and what would be best for me? Of course, so long as reason was only dawning, only germinating, the consciousness of there being such a question could only be vague, obscure, and partial, but wherever reason is active, wherever the claims of morality are acknowledged, wherever there is remorse or shame for unfaithfulness to an ideal, it must be present. Man is not properly man until he asks the question in some form. Until he asks it clearly his mind and nature are immature.

Universal history attests that for many ages man has been pondering over this question. A Hebrew psalmist tells us that in his day there were "many that said, Who will show us any good?" and gives as his own answer, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." The writer of Ecclesiastes speaks of many attempts to answer it, utters many daring doubts in regard to it, but ends with this advice as "the conclusion of the whole matter," the true answer to every seeker, "Fear God, and keep His commandments. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

For the sages of all the great Oriental nations the question, What is the Supreme Good? had an all-absorbing interest, and the answers which they gave to it mightily affected not only their own lives, but the lives of millions of their countrymen. You know how in all the Greek schools of philosophy, at least after the revolution in Greek thought which we associate with the name of Socrates, the great and dividing question in dispute among them was just this, What is the chief good? Plato and Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno, widely as they differ in other respects, agree as to the importance to be assigned to the inquiry regarding the end of action, the end in itself, the ultimate good. Even some of the most thorough of the Greek sceptics, although sceptical as to almost all other things, were not sceptical either as to life having a chief end or as to what the end was, but recommended doubt or suspension of judgment as to other things as a means of attaining that mental peace, that imperturbability, that freedom from passion and care, which they considered to be the chief good.

It is true that even from of old some voices have made themselves heard, asking, Is there really any good? Is everything not vanity and vexation of spirit? Is all search for happiness not folly? But such voices have been very few,—fewer even than those which have said, “There is no God” or “There is no eternal world.” In most cases, too, they have been the expression not of fixed convictions but of transient moods of mind. And among the few theorists of pessimism most have lived as if their doctrine were not true.

I cannot come to the conclusion that there is no chief good for man, no real satisfaction for the human heart, were it only for this reason, that I can perceive almost no one coming to this conclusion. Manifestly the human heart protests against it. Manifestly all natural human lives belie it. There is a deeply rooted feeling in us all that we have been made for good and not for evil, for happiness and not for misery. Every heart instinctively seeks happiness; spontaneously and eagerly grasps now at this and now at that in order to get happiness. Disappointment after disappointment cannot eradicate this strong desire. “While there is life there is hope,” men say; and at least so long as we live we continue to hope.

Can a feeling so universal be a delusion? Can a tendency so irresistible in every one of us lead only to disappointment? Were it so, surely the root of our nature would be a lie, and the author of our nature a deceiver. No! so long as I see men everywhere, in all conditions of life, with heart and hand, soul and body, seeking happiness, pursuing a good greater than earth ever yields them, cherishing a hope that always transcends present attainment, I shall believe that man has been formed for a good corresponding to his hope, one greater than our weak eyes clearly discern or our dull hearts rightly conceive, a good so grand and vast that it will be ever found better and larger than either our desires or our hopes.

If man has a chief good, a supreme end, however, we may well ask, Where and how will he find it? for it is too obvious that he very often does not find it. Indeed there is no man who does not in some measure fail to find it; who might not attain and enjoy it more fully than he actually does. Even



the wisest, best, and most zealous of our race would do well to press more earnestly forward than they do towards the mark where is the true goal of human life. The more clearly we see what that goal is, the more anxious we are likely to be so to run that we may not fail to reach it.

What sort of good, then, must the chief good be? must the highest end of human life be? It must necessarily be one than which there can be none higher or better; than which there can be none above or beyond; none which will satisfy human nature either more or longer. In other words, it cannot but be, if it be at all, a good which will completely meet every real want of every human being; which will correspond to every faculty and affection of human nature in every individual; which will never cease to satisfy the human soul; which will yield alike to the humblest and to the highest of the children of men a peace and happiness, a strength and joy, which nothing else can equal. Whatever cannot satisfy all men at all times, in all true respects and in all right ways, cannot be the chief good, the good each one of you ought above all things to seek for.

If such must be the chief good, you must obviously look high and far ahead before you can be sure of seeing it. For although it be near you, yea, close beside and around you, it is also far off, and there are thousands of things very near to you which you may easily mistake for it, and which if you follow instead of it will lead you to your ruin. All partial and perishing goods, all contracted and petty aims, all ends the pursuit of which will satisfy you only for some particular stage or period of your lives, ought to be clearly distinguished by you from the supreme good, the grand aim, the ultimate end of life, to which they ought always to be subordinate, and with which they are so apt to be in contradiction. No one who does not thus distinguish between the chief good and other goods has yet really got the mind of a man, no matter what his age may be. The thoughtlessness of childhood is still his predominant characteristic, however long he may have outgrown its innocence. To form a reasonable view of what is the ultimate object and true ideal of life, a man

must look upwards even to the throne of God, and forwards as far as to the judgment-seat of Christ.

If what has just been said be correct, it is obvious that there are large classes of things in which we cannot reasonably hope to find the chief good.

Let us look for a few moments, first, at what is, perhaps, the largest class of the kind, including as it does everything that refers to our bodily life,—all the pleasures of sense, all the beauties and bounties of nature, all merely worldly advantages. Is the chief good to be found there?

In answering without hesitation in the negative, I feel not the slightest need or the slightest inclination to disparage any of these things in themselves. They are good, although not the chief good. They are gifts of a loving God, and therefore good. Were they not so, were they merely or even mainly seductions and temptations, I cannot think that He who tempteth no man to evil, would have given them so liberally; that He would have made our bodies so susceptible of enjoyment as they are, all natural relationships so capable of yielding pleasure, the whole world so beautiful and bountiful. The ascetic ideal of life is not the highest, and is certainly not of universal obligation. The lower goods of life may all find a place in relation to the chief good, or, you may even say, within it; and to give them their due place is a wiser and a better thing than unnecessary abstinence from them or sour disdain of them.

But the chief good they are not. Experience abundantly shows this. No man with a properly human soul in his body has ever found full satisfaction within the visible world—among the things of time and sense. Where will you find in this world the most miserable of men? Just among its so-called men of pleasure; just among those who make the pursuit of worldly pleasure the chief or sole object of their lives. The more exclusively and strenuously men seek this end, and the more abundant their opportunities and means of pursuing it are, the more certain are they to find their labour to have been lost, and that what they have really earned and obtained for themselves are disappointment, shame, self-

reproach, misery. It is just such men who cry most bitterly, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." If a few of them have succeeded in stifling the cry, it is only through having destroyed what was distinctively human and left merely what was animal in them. Until then, I believe, a human being never quite silences the voice of the inner man within him which calls for more than mortal food, for more than earth can give.

Man cannot be satisfied with material goods. He cannot be made happy according to the measure of his possession of them. It is told of Prince Bismarck that when urged to pass a certain act on the ground that it would make dissatisfied workmen contented, he replied that he had never known a contented millionaire. Carlyle had previously declared his belief that the whole world would not satisfy the soul of one poor shoe-black, but that if he got it he would grumble over its defects, and want another. There is no observant physician or clergyman, no man who has been brought much into close contact with diverse classes of his fellow-creatures, who will not tell you that they have found most unhappy people among those who were richest in the world's goods, and wonderfully contented people among those who were exceedingly poor. What is outward in a man's lot is often far from indifferent to his happiness, but the character of his own mind counts for much more. The circle of your acquaintances in life will be limited if there be not among them some who grow only the more unhappy the less reason you, or anybody else, can see for their being unhappy at all. And you may have the great privilege of knowing others who have none of their external, their personal, or social advantages, who are even weak and diseased in body, poor and pinched in their circumstances, and burdened and tried in various ways, so that you might almost think that God had really done little for them, until you discover that He has given them one of those souls which, as Faber says, "have the gift of finding joy everywhere, and of leaving it behind them when they go; so that joy gushes from under their fingers like jets of light; and their influence is an inevitable gladdening of the heart."

It would be strange were experience in this matter other than what it is. It would be so, just because man is man,

and as such has a soul as well as a body, spiritual affections and faculties as well as animal appetites and powers. No animal of a higher nature can be satisfied with the life of an animal of a lower nature. Much less must man, who is more or less of a truly spiritual nature, and is thereby distinguished from all other living creatures on earth, be capable of being satisfied with what is wholly animal. He cannot but feel degraded in his own eyes, and deserving the contempt of his fellow-men, if he become the slave of his body, if his affections be confined to earthly objects, if he content himself with any ignoble happiness.

All that is merely earthly man must soon lose. He carries no temporal advantages with him beyond the grave, and only few of them so far. Many of them may have proved to be worth very little. The value of all of them is strictly limited.

God has, however, put a sense of eternity and infinity into the human heart, which makes it impossible for anything perishable and finite to satisfy it. Hence, even if there were no eternal life, no life beyond the grave, and consequently no good beyond what earth supplies, although such good would be the utmost to which man can attain, and in that sense his chief good, yet it would not be the chief good which sages and saints, which all wise and good men, have sought; not the chief good in the strict sense; not a completely satisfying good; not the good to which all that is good in man tends, and in which alone his whole nature can find rest and joy. It would give no satisfaction to what is best in his being. To have to content himself with it would prove that his nature is a self-contradiction, and that what is lowest in it must gain the victory over what is highest.

It may be that some one here has doubts as to whether or not there is an eternal life beyond the grave. Such doubt is possible. But is there any one here who doubts that there is a sense of eternity in his own heart? Such doubt is, I think, not possible to a mind which honestly interrogates itself. And what I say is that that feeling of eternity, that spark of infinity, which he has within himself, which you all have within you, will make it impossible for you to be otherwise than disappointed with whatever is merely temporal and finite.

Would that I could get you to believe this here and now, and to act on it henceforth. For if you do not, if instead you seek your happiness only in the goods which earth can give you, your lives must be each a series of disappointments, ending in your being stripped of all which you have toiled for, when you have probably lost any sense of or desire for the good which endureth for ever. But if, on the contrary, you start on your careers convinced that there is within you that which earth cannot satisfy, yet to which there is a full response in God Himself, I feel sure that you will so pass through this world as not to be greatly disappointed with it, for you will not only have refrained from asking from it what it cannot give, but will have learned that even what is deficient and seemingly disappointing in it has been useful to you, and helped to prepare you for the eternal life and the infinite goodness which you see to be still before you.

We cannot find, then, the chief good among the objects of sense. Shall we find it within the sphere of mere intellect—in the acquisition of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the culture of our mental faculties? Now, undoubtedly, those who do seek for it here seek it in a higher and purer, and therefore likelier region than those whose souls remain always among material things. They are certainly in less danger of utterly degrading themselves. But will they find what they seek? Is the chief good really where they look for it? I answer, No. And for such reasons as the following.

A very small portion of our race has adequate opportunities for mental culture, and a still smaller portion of it possesses the faculties required for success in intellectual pursuits. There are few so circumstanced as to be able to spend their lives in the search after truth or in the attainment of artistic skill. Originality of thought is a very rare endowment. It requires an amount of labour of which few are capable to become even merely learned in any considerable department of knowledge, and in the course of the labour how often must a mass of rubbish be gathered which is just as worthless as cart-loads of material dross.

Again, it is easily possible, and very common, greatly to

exaggerate the satisfaction to be found in intellectual pursuits. There are eulogies of these pursuits which might lead you to suppose that students of all kinds, scientists, and artists, must lead quite Elysian lives. Most certainly such is not the case. Students in general find it difficult enough to secure an ordinary pass or an average position through a process of preparation far from wholly delectable. And to reach greater eminence means, not less assuredly, more pain rather than more pleasure. I doubt very much if Mr Ruskin found as much enjoyment in penning those wonderful and beautiful sentences which he only could write, as his readers have done. We may be certain that he would have been the first to condemn himself if they had not cost him more toil and trouble than his readers imagined. No thoroughly honest intellectual work can fail to be largely painful work. Those who engage in it must expect to live laborious days, and perhaps to spend sleepless nights, and to find the greater portion of their time as devoid of agreeable emotion, as painful and fatiguing, as little satisfying as, say, even a life of business.

But further, and this is perhaps the most decisive consideration, the intellect is not what is highest in human nature, nor is its culture an end in itself. The intellect is entitled to take precedence of the body. To be intelligent, thoughtful, wise, is better than to be handsome, strong, or wealthy. But you cannot be truly intelligent, thoughtful, and wise, without acknowledging that to be good, pure-hearted, generous, self-denying, faithful to the obligations of duty, is nobler and better, than to have learning, or science, or culture. A man may, indeed, be perfectly justified in devoting himself mainly to the prosecution of scientific researches, or to the study and teaching of languages, or to the writing of books; but it can only be on the ground that he is honestly convinced that he can thereby do more good, benefit his fellow-men, and glorify God more, than if he, with his special aptitudes and acquisitions, employed himself otherwise. This is equivalent to saying that just as the body is inferior to the intellect, and bodily pleasure to mental intelligence, so is intellect itself inferior to conscience, and all its endowments and acquisitions, all learning, science, and culture to virtue and duty.

We are thus forced to ask, Shall we find in obedience to duty the chief end of man? Shall we find in the approval of conscience, in the satisfaction which flows from a sense of the fulfilment of the requirements of the moral law, the supreme good of life? When we ask this question, we cannot fail to feel that we have now come much nearer to the solution of our problem than we have hitherto been.

Obedience to the law of duty is binding upon all. It is an obligation which rests upon all men, and extends over the whole nature of every man. To have a good conscience, one void of offence towards God and man; to be blameless before the entire moral law, would indeed be a wonderful blessing, to which no bodily or merely intellectual good could be compared. I am not wholly surprised, therefore, that some eminent men, like Kant and Renan, should have answered the question before us by a decided yes; and I fully agree with all that they have said as to the sovereignty of conscience, and with the reasons which they have given for regarding obedience to the moral law as clearly required of us by the very constitution of our being, as essentially implied in the end to which our whole nature points.

Yet I do greatly marvel, notwithstanding this, that they should have been able to imagine their answer to be a sufficient one. Fulfilment of the law of duty, of the will of God? Is that not just what we are failing terribly to accomplish? Is not one of our chief wants want of earnest desire, of motive force, of spiritual power, to achieve that? Approval of conscience! Very good. But what if conscience be daily finding in us far more to condemn than to approve? What if it inflict more misery by its censures than it affords satisfaction by its commendations? Even the strongest and holiest of creatures must find more in their chief good than mere moral law and the approval of conscience. Assuredly weak and sinful man must.

Where then shall we find what is needed to supplement and complete the answer? Only, it seems to me manifest, in the love of the Moral Lawgiver, the love of God, the highest and worthiest object of our Love. Not in the objects of mere sense or of mere intellect, not in mere truth or in mere law, can the human heart completely rest, but only in what will fully respond to its deepest want, its central and most comprehensive

affection, its very life; only in an unalterable and undying, a pure, holy, and all-controlling love; the love of a Person; of the holiest and best Person the human heart can love, and who will not fail to return its love or to give it the consciousness thereof; the love of God, the Author of all things, and our gracious Heavenly Father; of God, who is Love, Infinite Love.

This, then, my friends, I would affirm to be the chief end of man and his supreme good—to love God with the whole mind, heart, and soul—to love Him at the very least so strongly and steadfastly that obedience to His law will be comparatively easy, and grow always easier, until all resistance to it ceases, and communion with Him is perfected. It would be easy to show, if time permitted, that this answer points to a good which has all those excellences for the want of which we have had to set other things aside. It is a good accessible to all; one on which our whole nature can concentrate itself, with the result that every energy, faculty, and affection, element and principle of it, will thereby be strengthened and improved; one which, far from lessening the sum of natural pleasure, tends greatly to increase it; one which gives an additional charm to all that is beautiful and a fresh interest to all that is true; one which ensures that our intellects will take a noble direction and our benevolence never grow cold; and which is for ever filled from those inexhaustible sources of purely spiritual enjoyment which are only to be found in direct and loving communion with God.

This answer, you will observe, is very much the same as that which is given in the Catechism to which I began by referring. I am not in the least ashamed, however, of its entire want of originality. For there is only one true answer to the question asked, and it was given long ago. There is no other real and adequate solution of the problem, which so many heathen sages, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, exercised all their intellectual power upon, than the Christian one. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle did not wholly fail; nay, they came so near to the truth regarding it, and thereby so near to the kingdom of God, that one may hopefully believe that they are now within it; but only He who clearly revealed the kingdom of God and founded it, made known the whole truth and really solved the problem.



Of all the questions which philosophy has ever asked, the question, What is the chief end of man? is the most directly and intensely important to man; and it is, perhaps, the only one which has got a definitive and authoritative answer. That answer came not from philosophy, but through the life, the death, and the doctrine of Christ. This is no disparagement of philosophy. Nay, I think it is to the immortal honour especially of Greek philosophy that it was to so large an extent, like Hebrew prophecy, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But, I say, the answer to this question has been given, and so given that it is folly to look for another. The answer is complete. But it is not to be concealed that there is one great difficulty connected with it. How are we to get such a love of God as it requires? To that question, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had nothing to say, and like the wise men they were silent. And so far as I know no one has come after them who has had anything of worth to say regarding it, who was not content virtually to repeat what Christ had said, to point to the love of God as revealed through Him, and to urge acceptance of His Gospel. "Come unto Me." "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

The Christian life must begin with a great act of renunciation. Self and the world must be cast out that God may come in. Love to Him must be supreme. Love to self and the world must be crucified in order that Christ may be followed. But thus to renounce all is to gain all; thus to die is to begin truly to live; thus to abjure all is to ensure a higher enjoyment of all. He that loves God with all his heart and serves Him with all his powers, working here, with a self-forgetting devotion, in the world where God has planted him, willing to forego pleasure, gain, renown, and everything else for the approval of God, shall find that everything comes back to him in its essential strength and spirit and with rich additions, seeing that God is not merely in all, but *includes* all, *is* all, and "will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly."

May He bless what has now been spoken. And to His name be glory for ever. Amen.

## VIII.

### OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

“Our Father which art in heaven.”—MATTHEW vi. 9.

OUR Lord's prayer is the most wonderful prayer which has ever been offered up to God; as far superior to all other prayers as our Lord to all other men; so extremely simple as to suit well the lips of little children, so rich and full of truth and feeling that the profoundest mind cannot exhaust either the wisdom or the love of any sentence in it. And its sentences are not more remarkable in themselves for largeness and depth of meaning, combined with brevity and plainness of wording, than for the perfection of their arrangement, each being precisely in that place in which it gets most meaning from the others or gives most meaning to them.

The sentence on which I would have you to meditate with me at this time—trusting that God may bless our meditations—is what is often called the preface to the Lord's Prayer. Its connection with the rest of the prayer is obvious. It is manifestly intended to bring us into the true spirit and frame of prayer; to make us feel in whose presence we are; that we are before the God of the whole world, the Creator of all men; that while we are on earth He is in heaven, high and lifted up above all praise and all adoration; yet that He is not severe to us in our creaturely weakness and sinful unworthiness, but gracious, and loving, and anxious that we should draw near to Him, and pray to Him as what He really is—a Father to us.

This frame of mind, this childlike confidence combined with that awful reverence which is due from such feeble creatures as we are to their Almighty Creator, this rejoicing sense of God's fatherly love to us, along with the deep consciousness of His greatness and holiness, is not a natural and common but a very peculiar and exceptional frame of mind. Thus to

pray is not an easy but a very difficult thing. The whole religious history of the human race proves it to be indeed most difficult. Perhaps wherever men are—certainly almost wherever men are—you will find them with some sort of religion, some sense of a will or wills higher than their own to which they stand in some relation and must yield some sort of homage; but nowhere outside of revealed religion, nowhere in the whole wide extent of what is called heathendom, will you find them drawing near to God, intelligently and lovingly, without undue fear on the one hand or undue familiarity on the other, as children to their Father in heaven. In every religion there are some elements of truth; wherever men have sincerely sought after God they have been privileged to get some glimpses of His presence—He has never left Himself without a witness—and yet a clear and consistent knowledge of His Fatherhood has never been attained by any searching of man, and will be sought as vainly in the highest forms of the greatest heathen religions as in the lowest and rudest. The voice of all heathendom is but as the voice of

“ An infant crying in the night ;  
 An infant crying for the light ;  
 And with no language but a cry.”

The history of all heathendom proves that in vain has man, God's self-willed child, ever tried to get of itself out of the darkness into which it has wandered back to the light, back to the sight of its Father's countenance. It is not the child who has found its father; it is the father who has gone and found his child.

Under the Old Testament dispensation itself we do not find that men prayed as our Lord has here taught us to do, or even that they were encouraged so to pray. In the Old Testament, God is spoken of under divers names, as God Almighty, the Lord, the Lord God, the Lord Jehovah, the God of Abraham, the Holy One of Israel;—but these names either indicate what He is in Himself or refer to His relationship not to individuals but to the Jewish nation as a covenant people. In the comparatively few passages in the Old Testament where God is distinctly spoken of as a Father, the name is almost always

used in the latter of these ways; the child to whom He is Father being no individual but Israel or Ephraim, the covenant people, or some tribe or portion of it. And there was an obvious and sufficient reason why this should have been so. It is impossible to take a comprehensive view of the Old Testament dispensation without perceiving that its great aim, alike in its ceremonial observances, moral precepts, and prophetic teaching, was to open and deepen the sense of sin, to give reality and intensity to the recognition of moral law, to make known especially that aspect of God's character which we call His righteousness, His holiness.

It was not possible—nor was it in the nature of things fitting—that the knowledge of God's fatherly love and mercy should go before the knowledge of His holiness and hatred of sin; it required, on the contrary, to be based on it. For although it is only in the light of God's fatherhood that sin appears as hideous as it really is, and only in connection with it that God's holiness is to be seen in all its beauty, yet without a considerable knowledge of sin and holiness, without a certain depth of hatred of the one and love to the other, the revelation of God's fatherly love, were it intelligible at all, could be only hurtful. Hence a reason, I say, why, although the revelation of God's fatherhood be undoubtedly contained in the Old Testament, it is but little prominent there, whereas the prevailing spirit of the New Testament is emphatically a spirit of adoption, a spirit which cries, "Abba, Father."

And this same fact that we cannot think aright of God as a Father, that we cannot truly go to Him as children, if we leave out of sight His holiness or forget our own sinfulness, makes it a difficult thing even now for any of us to utter as we ought those simple words: "Our Father in heaven." That is a fact the New Testament never allows us to forget. It is no accidental or exceptional thing that God's fatherhood and holiness should be so closely connected as they are in this prayer, that the name of God as our Heavenly Father should be no sooner pronounced than a supplication should follow that it may be hallowed; no accidental or exceptional thing, but an instance of a principle or rule which goes all through the New Testament. To know how difficult it is to say aright,

that is, feeling the truth and preciousness of what we say, "Our Father in heaven," and to feel in consequence how greatly the Spirit is needed to enable us to overcome the difficulty—how large a measure of the Spirit is required in order that we may utter truly that one word, "Abba, Father"—let us, prayerfully, inquire what it means—what our text means.

Now, first, it plainly means at least this, that God stands in a close living relationship to us; that He is directly connected with us, and has practically to do with us and we with Him. The relation of father and son is that of person with person, yea, the nearest and most binding which can connect two persons. Well, there is a vast amount of thought and speech in the world about God which overlooks this fact, or at any rate takes no account of it. There is, for instance, a great deal of reasoning about the Divine Existence, as to whether the arguments for that are good and sufficient or not; then, there is a great deal of speculation now, as there has been for ages past, about the Divine Nature, about what we mean when we say God is Infinite, Eternal, the Absolute Being, the First Cause, &c.; and there is a still greater amount of discussion and inquiry as to what creation, history, and especially Scripture tell us about the attributes and ways of God. And there is certainly nothing blamable in such thought in itself; if wisely conducted it is, on the contrary, highly to be commended. There are some here whose daily business it is thus to occupy their minds, and they may justly regard such occupation as a peculiarly exalted and noble one; but let none of us forget this, that we may have our minds full of such thought, full of thoughts about God, and yet that God Himself may not be in all our thoughts.

For God Himself is no mere problem or conclusion of our minds, no abstraction or doctrine, but an Infinite living Being or Person, one who thinks, feels, and wills, who hates evil and loves good, and who is nearer us, more closely present to us, more concerned and interested in us, than any fellow-creature can be. The knowledge of God which does not bring us, as it were, face to face with Him as a living Person, which is not accompanied with a sense of His real presence, may be in some

respects deep and subtle and comprehensive, it may include a whole system of religious speculation or divinity, but it will not enable us to utter in a right spirit, or even with true intelligence, the first word of Christian prayer. If that be our only knowledge of God we may have the whole of it in our minds when we say "Our Father in heaven," and yet the little child who ignorantly thinks of God as having the form of a man, and as sitting on a material throne above the clouds, but who really feels that God is seeing and hearing and loving him, will say them with far more truth and profit than we. In the heart of sinful man there is a rooted unwillingness to have to do with God Himself, a shrinking from realising that He the Holy One and Father of our spirits, is really here where we are, a sense of restraint and discomfort in the consciousness of His presence if we are following any self-willed course of our own, akin to what a profligate son has under the eye of a wise and upright earthly father; and so there is a strong temptation on us to substitute for the real and living knowledge of God Himself a mere knowledge of notions and doctrines about Him, a knowledge which may be quite true in its way, but which is surely not all the knowledge that sons ought to have of a father, nay, which proves, if it be all the knowledge we have of God, that the feeling of His fatherhood, the true life of sonship, is yet unquickened, unborn in us.

Again, the words under consideration mean that God feels towards men as a father towards his children; that He regards them as His offspring, and has a deep and tender affection to them in consequence; that underneath all His conduct towards them is the same sort of love and care which a good man shows, although in a feebler and lower degree, towards his sons and daughters here on earth. The signs or evidences of this being truly the case, of God's having a father's heart towards men, are scattered over all the world, which was made in part for the instruction, comfort, and use of men, may be traced in His manifold dealings with them in providence, and shine out most conspicuously of all in the wonders of redemption. But neither in creation, providence, nor redemption are we to look for more than signs or evidences, than effects or consequences of God's fatherly love. We need not seek in any of them for

its causes or sources or explanation. It was before them all; in some measure explains them all, while in no measure does any one of them explain it. It is the root; they are its flowers and fruit.

God's fatherhood rests not on creation and providence, but has its principle in the love which prompted creation and underlies providence. He has not merely made Himself to be our Father by creating and preserving us, but He has created and preserved us because of a Fatherly love to us which had no beginning. It is no superfluous knowledge which the Scripture gives us, but most blessed and precious truth, when it insists so often and emphatically that the love wherewith God has loved us was one which dated from long before the world was, yea, a love which was from everlasting. Out of that everlasting love of the Eternal Father's heart arose redemption; and only from a love of wondrous depth and tenderness could it have arisen.

There are those who speak as if God were only in some very cold and distant way the Father of unregenerate men; as if He were their Father in name merely and not in fact; as if He were a Father merely because He gave them existence and health, success in business, domestic comforts, and the blessings of civilisation, but all without any real love to them, any wish that these things might do them true good; but that is surely the hard unjust thought of a heart which knows God ill, and which has got miserably darkened and confused through the working of some evil and ungenerous passion, or of some narrow and erroneous doctrine. Were it true, how could any of us ever have come to be saved? We were all unregenerate—all without Christ once—and if God had only been in some cold and distant way our Father He would assuredly never have made such a sacrifice as sending Christ to die for us. The fact of such a redemption as that having been provided at all is of itself the fullest proof of God having loved us with an everlasting love, and of His having never ceased to be in the most real and loving sense a Father, even in our lowest depths of sin and misery. It was the gift of God's unspeakable love to unregenerate men, and so could not be the cause of His love, while it of its very nature tells us that be we who or what we may we have a Father in heaven truly concerned about us,

yea, one full of thoughts and feelings of inconceivable love to us; that if we are living without a Father's love it is because we are wilfully rejecting it; that however prodigal we have been we have only to arise and go to Our Father, assured that we shall find every word of that great parable of the prodigal son marvellously true, that we shall find that even "when yet a great way off, our Father will see us and have compassion, and run and fall on our necks and kiss us," since His eye has been following us with pity through all our waywardness and wanderings from Him, and His heart sincerely desiring our return, so that He is quick to behold the first movements of our souls towards Him and to hear the first faint sighings of our hearts after Him, and most ready to clothe us with the best robes, to give us the royal ring of the children in His house, and to feast us with the fatted calf, in His great gladness that His son who was dead is alive again; that His lost child is found.

I would here guard myself, however, from a possible misconception. Through Christ God is seen to be our Father, not made our Father. There was no need that Christ should die in order that God might have a Father's love to us, but Christ died to reveal to us that He had it. Now, some here are aware that those who have done most in recent times by speech and writing to bring this fact into due prominence in Christian thought and life, to confirm men's faith in the fatherhood of God, are blamed by many for unsettling faith in the Atonement. They have so insisted, it is said, on God's fatherly love to all men as virtually to imply that there can have been no other barrier to free and full communion between God and the sinner than the unwillingness of the sinner to be reconciled to God. And I fear there is considerable truth in the charge, although doubtless it has often been exaggerated, and oftener still applied where it ought not to have been.

Since it seems possible then so to look at the truth of God's fatherhood as that it shall overshadow and obscure instead of illuminating and beautifying that of His Son's atonement, let me say that I cannot but think such a way of looking at it must be a wrong one, and that it seems to me as unnatural that faith in God's fatherhood should lead to undervalue



faith in Christ's atonement, as that faith in Christ's atonement should have been sometimes so inculcated as to confuse and weaken faith in the Eternal Father's love.

God had always a father's love to us. Does it follow that He has had only love to us? Has a good father among men no sense of justice, of right and wrong, in the character and conduct of his children? Has he, because he is their father, no anger against their sins? Has he no hatred against a vile crime, if only a son of his be the doer of it? I can ascribe no such character to any good man. And far less dare I ascribe it to God. Some persons tell us that they shrink from ascribing anger, hatred, wrath to God. But I, for my part, shrink with my whole soul from the thought of a God incapable of anger, hatred, wrath. One must have a God whom one can respect, and it is impossible to respect any one—man or God—who has no anger or hatred against sin, who can look upon what is morally vile without that abhorrence which may justly be called wrath. There are, indeed, an anger, a hatred, and wrath abounding among men, which are evil in themselves and work great evil, being excited by personal and selfish motives, directed on improper objects, and kept under no due regulation; but there are also a hatred, anger, wrath, which are not weaknesses but excellences, which are as needful in the world as love, and far more needful than much of the superficial benevolence which falsely passes for love; and these, like all other excellences, must be in God in a supreme degree. A merely amiable God must be like a merely amiable man, a being devoid of moral principle, a being not to be trusted, yea, a being incapable of true love, for love and hate are so far inseparable that the power of the one is ever the measure of the power of the other.

God loved us even in our lost estate with an inconceivable fatherly love. True. But did He not love Christ, His only begotten Son, still better than He loved us? And must He not have had the most awful, infinite reasons for giving Him over to death? Could the difficulties of the case have been overcome in any other way surely that way would not have been taken; that it was taken is proof that terrible, infinite difficulties had to be encountered. The very nature of the

atonement, the very magnitude of the sacrifice involved in it, makes it incredible that it was merely a reconciling of man to God, even apart from the many passages of Holy Scriptures which contradict that view.

While, then, want of fatherly love in God could never be the hindrance to our receiving the blessings our souls need, it does not follow that the eternal laws of righteousness broken by us placed no difficulties in the way of that love flowing freely forth; that they were not barriers to its reaching us, which only the atonement could remove; obstacles not in our nature but in the Divine Nature, and so far beyond the sphere of our influence and control. It may be said that this implies the love which they kept back from us to be limited. But not at all. Love is not so measured. It may turn its restraints into the proof of its vastness, its intensity, its infinity; and this, as I believe, is just what the love of God has done. It is not when we think of it as having had no obstacles to overcome in order to reach us, but when we take account of these, that we conceive most warmly and feel most warmly as regards it.

Yes, God's love had great obstacles to overcome ere it could reach us to save us. No wisdom less than God's could have devised that it should reach us at all. No power less than God's could have carried into execution what His infinite wisdom had devised, and no love less than God's could have taken that marvellous way and struggled, as it were, down to us through the incarnation, life, sufferings, and death of His Son, to rise up on Calvary as a fountain of healing to the nations. But that power has reached us. God, working slowly and surely through ages, has perfected on the Cross of His Son a mighty plan by which He can be just and yet justify His sinful children, ay, and crown them with all His loving-kindnesses and tender mercies. Whatever obstacles previously existed in the righteousness of the Divine Nature to this have now been completely and for ever removed through God's fatherly love having found the mysterious, the awful, the blessed method of atonement and sacrifice to reach us with all its blessings.

The atonement of Christ, then, far from standing in any

relation of opposition or exclusion to the eternal and universal fatherhood of God, can only be regarded as the way which His fatherly love was necessitated to take in order that, consistently with the justice of His nature and the moral fitness of His universe, He might seek and find, deliver and save, His lost children. And this leads me to the further remark that it is only in the atoning, self-sacrificing work of Christ that we have perfectly convincing evidence of God's fatherhood, an adequate disclosure of His having a father's heart towards us. I have already said that there are signs or evidences of God's fatherly love in creation and providence, and I in no way think I retract or explain away that statement when I add that, unless seen in the light reflected on them from redemption, they will appear only an incomplete proof of God's cherishing fatherly love to sinful men. In the light of the Cross it is otherwise; the man who looks at the works of creation in that light will unhesitatingly and with full reason say, "My Father made them all," and will easily and clearly trace in all the dealings of providence a father's hand guiding His children.

Suppose, however, that blessed light not shining or shut out, and that creation and providence are before us in no other light than their own, and what then can they teach us about God? Substantially just this—that He has vast power, since He has created and sustains and controls the whole of this mighty universe; wondrous wisdom, since He has arranged everything so well and directs everything so well; and a goodness corresponding to His power and wisdom, since a beneficent purpose may be detected underlying all His works of creation, and pervading the course of providence. I cannot see, and can scarcely suppose even that any one will seriously maintain, that creation and providence teach us more than that God is thus powerful and wise and good; and fully granting that they teach us all this, if any one mean by God's being the Father of men no more than that He is as good as He is powerful and wise, and that His power and wisdom have been so employed on behalf of men that good gifts meet them at every step, I readily agree that creation and providence are sufficient to show God to be a Father in that sense and to that extent.

But is there nothing more, nothing higher than that, implied in fatherhood among men? Unquestionably there is. Love in the form of mere goodness is far from the noblest and most distinctive quality in a human father's heart; nay, there is no true fatherliness of heart at all in a man in whom there is nothing better than that. One can by an effort of imagination indeed conceive a man to have children so absolutely innocent and happy, and so perfectly guarded from all possibility of evil and suffering, that love in the form of goodness or kindness would be the only kind of love he could show them; but would his fatherly love be ever really tested in that case? Could he ever show the deeper, the truly distinctive feelings of a father's heart, those we so often see manifested in the toils, the hardships, the dangers, the sacrifices of wealth, comfort, and even life, which parents undertake and endure for their children? Certainly not.

Well, apply this to God. In what sense is He a father? In what sense has He fatherly love? Among the angels this question could have no place, for they were such perfectly innocent and happy children, that love in the form of goodness was all they required—all that could be shown to them. And it would have been the same with men also if they had not fallen. But as soon as sin, suffering, and death invaded earth and seized on man's body and soul, and help or healing there was none for him in any creature, the most awful of questions for the human race came to be whether or not God was a father in the full meaning of that term, or, in other words, whether or not He had a love which, in order to save men, would submit to humiliation, suffering, sacrifice?

Now, that is what I say creation and providence cannot prove. Point to anything in creation or to anything in ordinary providence which you can show to have *cost* God anything. You can easily point to thousands and thousands of things and events which you may justly conclude to be signs or gifts of God's goodness, but can you point to one thing in creation, one event in ordinary providence, which you can seriously maintain to come from a self-sacrificing love such as a father displays when he rushes into a house in flames or throws himself into a raging flood to save the life of his child at the risk of his own? If

you cannot, you fail to prove God a father in the sense I mean. And in that sense, which is the true sense, there seems to me no possibility of proving God a father from creation and providence apart from redemption.

Wherein is it that both fail? Obviously in this, that they can show us no traces of sacrifice on God's part. But it is just here that redemption comes in. God in the unspeakable gift of His Son shows us a power of sacrifice infinitely above anything known among men, an intensity of tenderest fatherly affection of which the strongest fatherly affection on earth is but a pale and feeble reflection; and Christ in His incarnation, life, sufferings, and death, reveals to us not merely the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God, but the very depths, if we may so speak, of His heart as a father, enabling us to feel without a doubt that now indeed are we the sons of God.

Leaving unwillingly much unsaid on this part of my subject, I remark, further, that our text distinctly calls us to remember that God while our Father, truly our Father, is, however, our heavenly Father, our "Father which art in heaven." We must not cease to stand in awe of Him because He is our Father; we must not lose remembrance of His majesty in the thought of His love; we must still realise who He is and who we are; where He dwells and where we dwell; that He is God over all, but specially present so far as the manifestation of His glory is concerned in the high and holy heavens, where His royal court, His presence chamber, His imperial throne are, and where His ministering spirits are the glorious angels and the blessed saints, who offer Him sinless services and spotless praises; while we are creatures of the earth, worms of the dust, with the pollution of earthly mire, of carnal appetite, of worldly passion on all we do.

Yet is He nevertheless most truly our Father, and therefore the fact that He is our Heavenly Father, while it should humble and awe our souls in His presence, should also raise and encourage them, elevate them out of the dust of the earth, make them ashamed of all unworthy grovelling therein, and set them instead to soar in contemplation and desire towards heaven, as their true dwelling-place. If our Father be in heaven, heaven must be our home. And we on earth must be,

as has been said, King's children, who have been put out to nurse, and sent to school at a distance from the palace to be brought up hardily and disciplined by divers kinds of trials, until we have learned steadiness and self-knowledge enough to be admitted into our Father's glorious mansions. It would assuredly ennoble our lives if we would take this view of them, which is as true as it is grand; if we would look up to heaven as our true home, where our Father is, and carry the thought of heaven always about us, as of a society closely and manifoldly related to us, as of a place specially belonging to us, as where we specially belong to, and whither in due season we shall not fail to be called, if only we strive to prepare ourselves for that exceeding great honour and blessing.

There is yet another truth which has always been seen to be contained in the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, a truth of vastest importance. God's fatherhood involves man's brotherhood. If we have "one God and Father," then "all we are brethren." Christ recognises this truth, and would have us to recognise it when He teaches us to pray "Our Father" or "Father of us," *i.e.* my Father, but the Father of all other men as well as of me. We can only draw near to the Father in a spirit of sympathy with His other children; we cannot ask any blessing aright if we ask it selfishly, wishing that we may get it but that others may not. The Father in heaven will not listen to any son who does not wish well to his brothers, much less who wishes any of them ill. This is another reason why, although it is very easy to commit the Lord's Prayer to memory, it is very hard to get the heart to learn it.

Is it not sometimes a difficult thing even for those who live in the same house, and who on the whole respect one another, or are even in the main sincerely attached to one another, to lay entirely aside, when they kneel together before God in the evening, every petty disagreement which may have occurred during the day, every feeling of bitterness and estrangement, so as to be able to say with all due heartiness of affection towards one another, in spirit and in truth, "Our Father," as the dear children God would have them to be? And, of course, it is still more difficult sincerely, rightly, to say it in a congregation where there are many whom we do not know, more

whom we know little, where social distinctions and differences of opinion come in, where there are rich who despise the poor and poor who envy the rich, where there are persons so selfish in disposition, or it may be even so vicious in conduct that we cannot respect them, or persons whose worldly interests are all opposed to our own, or persons with whom we may have quarrelled during the week, and may know that it is not unlikely we shall have to quarrel with again this week. But if we would be God's children we must be able to say it. We must overcome our indifference, feel that where there may be much to despise there is still more to be affectionately concerned about, and that we must never be so angry with any one, as that love does not underlie and pervade our anger, so that even in our estrangement and opposition we can from the heart wish him every good thing we ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps we can scarcely ask any better thing than that we may all be able to do this for one another, and may never feel so separated by anything from any one that we cannot truly pray with and for him, cannot carry his sins to God's throne with the earnest wish that they may be forgiven as well as our own, or cannot desire that he may receive everything truly for his good.

It is only on God's Fatherhood that the brotherhood of men can be surely rested. There is no other foundation strong or broad enough. We have in our own age seen the truth of this illustrated on the vastest scale. We have seen a great neighbouring nation pronouncing with fervent enthusiasm and inscribing on all her banners the word "fraternity"; we have seen her people, in many respects a most noble and generous people, vowing with the utmost solemnity before Europe to be "brothers" henceforth for ever; we have seen following fast on that enthusiasm strife and discord and intestine war, until the great and sacred name of fraternity was a word of light ridicule in the mouths of men; we have seen despotism arise on the ruins of that so-called fraternity; we have seen its terrible fall; and we have since seen long unrest. How came that about? How but mainly from this, that a multitude of these "brothers" acknowledged no Father in heaven, and thought they could make of France a happy household, yet keep out of it and have nothing

to do with the rightful Father of every household and rightful authority in every nation. They did not believe that "except the Lord build the house, the builders build in vain"; but it proved lamentably true, and it always will.

But how has it come to pass, then, that in these last days so many men in France, in Germany, in England, should be believing in human brotherhood and striving to realise it, yet disbelieving in God and regarding Christianity as an imposition, as an enemy? Oh, my friends, I fear there is no doubt as to what the answer must be; that it is just because those who have professed themselves to be Christians have *not* proved themselves to be brothers to their fellow-men. Far more than any other cause that, I believe, is the reason of the infidelity and irreligion which abound. It is one which lies at the door of professing Christians. If we would not have our Father's name more and more dishonoured; if we would not have Christ's work more and more neglected and despised; if we would not have the blood of our brethren on our hands, the loss of their souls on our heads, oh let us show that our love to God is real by the working of our love to men.

Let us love others as He loves us all, so that when we leave the world we shall have brought nearer the day when His Fatherhood will be universally acknowledged, when the wail of the oppressed shall never more pierce the air, when the seas of the world shall never more be dyed with blood, when all human eyes shall have a divine light shining in them, when all human voices shall have a heavenly melody of truth and love singing through them, when no human countenance shall have the mark of the beast or the brand of the devil on it, when the whole family of mankind shall form an electric chain of sympathy and love, when from all the nations of men there shall arise one sweet and sacred hymn of praise to Him who hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and to His Christ for ever. Amen.



## IX.

### THE DIVINE WILL.

“Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—MATTHEW vi. 10.

**I**F we ask God only for such things as we ought to ask from Him, it is impossible to ask for more in any prayer, however long, than we ask for in the Lord's Prayer, although it is so very short. It is possible to pray a long time and yet to pray very little, and the Lord's Prayer shows us how much prayer may be in, yea, how all prayer may be in, a very few simple words. It is true that man has wants without number; that there are countless things which he needs to ask from God; but it is also true that all these wants may be resolved into a few great wants, and all these things sought for in a few comprehensive petitions; and Christ, with His perfect knowledge of all our wants, and perfect sympathy with all our weaknesses, has in this prayer summed up for us all prayer with such a wonderful simplicity and such a wonderful completeness, that while a little child can not only easily remember, but easily understand it, no man among all the millions of the human race can need anything which he may not ask for simply by repeating it in spirit and in truth.

But in this prayer itself, which is so comprehensive as to contain all prayer, there is one petition so comprehensive that it may be said to contain all its other petitions; one petition to which all the others may be referred; into which they all may be resolved. And this petition is that on which, in dependence on God's blessing, I wish to make a few remarks to you at this time. This all-comprehensive petition, the organic and vital centre, the heart, yea, the very sum and substance, of the Lord's Prayer, and of all true prayer, is, “Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God's name can be hallowed only by His Will being done,—God's kingdom comes only in the measure that His Will is done,—the bread we ask for is only

what will give us strength to do God's Will,—the sins we pray to be forgiven are our acts of resistance to His Will;—the temptations we seek not to be led into are whatever things would entice us from obedience to His Will,—and the evil or the Evil One we beseech Him to deliver us from is the enemy of His Will, that wicked antagonistic will which is the awful mystery and the chief cause of the misery of this world.

And why is this prayer thus central in the Lord's prayer? Why does it thus pervade and organise it into a beautiful whole? Just because it is God's Will which is central in the universe, which underlies and pervades the worlds both of nature and spirit, and is the source of whatever order and beauty they possess. Prayer that God's Will may be fully and rightly done is the first of all prayers, and a prayer which includes all other prayers, because God's Will itself is the first of all things and the source of all blessings; because apart from that will there is nothing which ought to be prayed for; because only in and through it can any good thing come to us.

Let us think for a moment what the true place of that Will is in the world. What is its place in nature, mere nature, nature as distinguished from Spirit? We are far from knowing either precisely or fully what its place there is. It may perhaps be, as many thinkers have supposed, a far wider one than either ordinary men or the general body of scientific men believe; it may be not only the cause and preserving and controlling power of nature but its substance, its self. It may be that matter is essentially force, and nothing but force; that the whole material universe is ultimately resolvable into forces; and that all these forces are but manifestations or outgoings of the force of Will. If so, the whole universe is not only dependent on but *is* the Will of God, and has no being of any kind apart from the Will of God. But whether this "may be," this speculative hypothesis, be true or false, what is certain is that God's Will originated nature at the first, and that nature owes whatever order, beauty, use, it yet has to His Will. Created by His Will, it has been preserved and governed by His laws, and these laws not only do not in any way compete with, exclude, or limit His Will, but they are the expressions of His Will. They are directly or indirectly the modes in which

His Will works, and works itself out by them into all the loveliness and grandeur, into all the harmonies and utilities, all the serenity, joy, and gladness, which fill the heavens, the earth, the sea. God's Will, then, sustains, pervades, beautifies, and animates nature,— clothes each lily, feeds each bird, uttereth itself in speech day unto day, and showeth knowledge night unto night. We may say of it with all sober truthfulness—

“Flowers laugh before Thee on their beds,  
And fragrance in Thy footing treads ;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;  
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.”

When we pass from the world of mere nature into that of spirit, we find that God's Will equally underlies, pervades, and rules it. It is true that His Will here manifests itself under a very different form. It no longer appears as laws which are uniform and irresistible in their action, as laws the swing of which is unquestioned and unopposed, but as a something still more worthy of our awe and admiration, as a mighty plan which comprehends within its calculations all the resistance of millions of hostile wills, which realises itself not only in spite of that resistance but through it, which slowly and silently and surely unfolds itself amidst all the selfishness and pride, confusion, and tumult, and war, which abound on this rebellious earth. Dark and chaotic as human history may at first sight look, abandoned as it may have often seemed to brute force, despotic caprice, heartless greed, and ruthless cruelty, not faith only but reason too may find that there is always something deeper in it than these ; an Infinite Will which uses or baffles finite wills ; an Infinite Will which never loses, which unceasingly advances to the accomplishment of its purposes of wisdom, justice, and mercy. Yes, as certainly as the study of nature leads to the knowledge of laws by which God governs nature even in what seems to us most minute, obscure, or remote, so certainly does the study of history lead to the knowledge of a system of order within which God has embraced even the deeds recorded in the darkest and saddest pages of the annals of the world. No thoughtful student of

history can fail to perceive that in the barbarian invasions, in the feudal system, in the Papacy, in battles, conquests, massacres, revolutions, God has been present, not suffering them to fall out of His hand, but making them work together for good, and compelling the very iniquity and wrath of man to praise Him. Were God not thus ever mightily and mercifully present it would be impossible to support the sight of such spectacles as the world often presents. Assuredly it were better not to live at all than to live where God's Will did not overrule human wills. But a world of mere human wills, a world of wills not overruled by the Divine Will, is a thing for ever impossible. Were God's Will withdrawn even for an instant from nature, nature would dissolve into chaos, ay, sink into nothingness; and, not less, were God's Will withdrawn even for an instant from history, would history fall into chaos, into nothingness.

But God's Will manifests itself in another form than either as laws of nature or plan of providence. It manifests itself in the laws of conscience, the laws of moral and religious life. God's Will as expressed in the laws of nature is not, and cannot be, resisted even in appearance, and as expressed in the laws of providence it can be resisted only in appearance. These latter laws so embrace as to baffle all attempts to put them aside. Acts of resistance to God's Will fall within His providential plan equally with acts of obedience. To defeat every act of resistance, to make it subserve another end than the doer of it intended, and to punish it,—that is a part of His plan. God's plan of providence is essentially the same thing as those decrees of God which theologians often speak of in so abstract and empty a way, but which are notwithstanding very practical and awful realities, which we cannot escape from, which we cannot alter, and which are done on earth at this moment, just as perfectly as they will ever be, just as perfectly as they are done in heaven.

But God's Will in the form of moral law is of a very different nature. It may be resisted; it may be set aside. That we can set it aside—in that consists our responsibility. That we do set it aside—in that lies our sin. Is this, then, a lower form of God's Will? less important? less essential? Most certainly

not. This is the highest form of all; the holy of holies of the universe. The laws of nature have all a reference to the plan of providence, and are subservient to it; and the whole plan of providence has a reference to the final triumph of truth and righteousness, and is subservient thereto. God's designs, God's purposes, never let us speak of them as arbitrary, never let us speak of them even as so secret that we must be utterly ignorant of what they are and what they mean. There is much about them which we do not and cannot know, but we do know their essential character and meaning, and know it as certainly as we know that there is a God at all. We know that they are righteous and merciful, and that they mean that righteousness and mercy will prevail in the end, everything which exalts itself against them being certain to be cast down; that God's power and wisdom work to vindicate and establish holiness; that His laws of nature and of providence have for goal the reign of the laws of righteousness.

God's holiness has, however, spoken directly for itself. The broken laws of righteousness have had a far more wondrous testimony borne to their inherent sanctity, and to their place in the world, and their place in the thoughts of God, than either nature or ordinary providence could offer. God has left man to find out and glorify His other laws in such ways as he can himself devise, but these laws which you and I can so easily set aside, and which we are so apt to make light of, God has specially and wondrously stooped from heaven in order to magnify and make honourable. The manifestation of Himself which He has presented to us in His Son is from beginning to end a monument to their majesty. Christ, our Saviour, who taught us to pray, "Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," lived as He prayed. His whole work as our Saviour was a carrying out of His saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O Lord." It was "His meat to do the will of the Father that sent Him." His every act was an act of subjection to that Father's Will; He suffered no other will to be in Him; and when it called him to bear the scourging of Pilate, the jeering of Herod, the buffeting of the soldiers; to give His back to the smiters, His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, His face to shame and spitting; to carry His cross, to hang on it,

to die; He accepted it without a murmur or complaint, asserting no will of His own, but saying always, "Father, Thy Will be done,"—"Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." His incarnation, life, sufferings, and death, are the great illustrations of the prayer He taught us, and show us clearly why He gave this petition regarding God's Will the place in it which He did. They tell us, as nothing else could, what place He thought due to God's righteous will or moral law in the universe; what reverence is paid in heaven to that law, not only by the angels, but by Him who is infinitely higher above the highest angels than they are above us. And no one who has in any measure come under the influence of these facts, no one who has in any measure felt the power of Christ's work and example, can fail to feel that the Will—the moral Law—of God is of all things the most sacred, the most worthy of our admiration and praise, and of our praying and striving to obey, and to do.

It has by some been deemed a want in the Lord's Prayer, a something which makes it, although it may have been perfect before Christ's death, inadequate now as an expression of the feelings of Christian men, that there is no reference in it to the atonement or sacrifice of Christ. But, perhaps, few will find the opinion well founded. Of course, there is no explicit reference to Christ and His work, but we have only, I think, to remember who taught us the prayer, and how *He* lived in the spirit of this "Thy Will be done," how He suffered and died in it, and we shall feel His whole life, work, atonement, brought nearer us by these words than almost any other words, even the most explicit, could bring them. Certain it is that only when we can say "Thy Will be done" in the spirit in which it was taught us, that is, when we can say it in truth, has Christ's work of sacrifice and atonement come to have any personal meaning or worth to us. Christ's working out this petition in His life and death *was* the atonement, and only through bringing us into the same life, so that what the petition asks for is the deepest want of our life, has His work, His sacrifice, accomplished in any degree its end in us.

Having said this much as to the place generally of the petition in prayer and life, and of the place of God's Will in the universe, I have now briefly to consider what is implied in the

petition itself. And first, I may say, this is implied in it, that God's Will ought to be done on earth but is not done. The very asking that it should be done is a confession that it is not done. We have reason to rejoice that the Lord reigneth in nature and providence, but we do not need to pray that He would do so as we need to pray that He would reign over our hearts and wills; it is a subject for gratitude and praise that His laws of nature and the designs of His providence are executed as they are, but no subject for petition just because they are executed perfectly, and there is no real possibility of resisting them; but with His will as manifesting itself in righteousness it is otherwise, for it can be disobeyed, and our prayer for its being obeyed is itself an admission of its being disobeyed. The confession is a very sad one to have to make, but there can be no religion in any man until it is made in all sincerity; there can be no spiritual good for any man until he feels the bitterness of living in revolt against the perfectly good and righteous will of his God and Father in heaven; until he feels that it is a truly horrible thing to be in rebellion against the Infinite holiness and Infinite love of the Will that made and rules the world.

We all know that although an earthly father may not always command wisely or even kindly, nothing but mischief can come from children discarding his authority and doing only what pleases themselves; that acceptance of his will is, in general, the condition of everything good, of all happiness, in family life. Well, we shall do no good in this world until it is our sincerest, inmost conviction that the disorder, shame, and misery of a family whose members have thrown off all respect for the law or will of its head, can but feebly represent the disorder, shame, and misery involved in revolt against the Will of our Father in heaven. We all know that rebellion even against a human government is a terrible thing, which can be justified only in the most extreme circumstances, only when the government is thoroughly reckless and immoral and endangers the essential liberties or very existence of a nation, because the horrors of civil war are so awful, and its results, even when the leaders of the revolt are at the outset both able and virtuous, so uncertain; that a civil government or rule to

serve as the one presiding, fixed, regular will in a commonwealth is so essential, that were it completely withdrawn for a month, even from a country so far instructed in Christianity and generally enlightened as our own, and were every man thus left to do as he pleased, the evil done in that one month would outbalance the good done in many years, if not centuries. And, assuredly, if we fancy that a recognition of the spiritual government of men is less essential to their welfare than the recognition of the civil government of them, that can only be accounted for by our being spiritually dead and consequently spiritually blind. Wherever there is a living spiritual eye it is seen that obedience to a governing Will is still more essential in the spiritual than in the family or civil life, and disobedience to it a still more dreadful thing. It is seen that this disobedience has no excuse, since here the law is never foolish, harsh, or wrong, but always absolutely wise, just, and merciful. It is seen that this disobedience must spread out into disobedience in the family, in the state, everywhere. It is seen that nothing but boundless evil can come of it; that it is explanation enough of all the woes of earth.

But, in the second place, this petition means that we are prepared to submit or sacrifice our own wills to the Will of God. It cannot mean less to us than this if we present it with the least sincerity. "Thy Will be done,"—therefore not ours so far as they are different from Thine. But that means the entire surrender and sacrifice of our wills. For this Will of God which we pray to be done is the will or law of a perfect righteousness. There is no righteous act whatever in any department of life which it does not enjoin, and none which we are not bound to do because it enjoins it. If our own will, therefore, is never to be followed in matters of righteousness where different from God's Will it can never be followed as ours at all, since it must always surrender itself to God's Will. These two facts, that God's Will is the law of a perfect righteousness, and that His Will is the will which is to rule, necessitate the inference, that man's will has no lawful independence in matters of righteousness, no right in any such matter to self-assertion, but is bound always to give itself completely over to God's Will. These two truths, I say,



necessitate that inference, and the man who faces these truths and honestly in his heart and life accepts the inference is a religious man ; the man who does not is still a worldling.

The sort of connection between God and man which I now speak of, and which in our text we ask for, the connection of a living finite will with the living infinite Will, is the only sort of connection which will hold. Any sort of connection less intimate, as, for instance, not only through the mere intellectual acceptance of Divine truths, but even through any kind of faith which stops short of an actual yielding of our selves, our wills, to the Will of God, or through any kind of feeling which, however admirable, does not involve the thorough change of nature which God's Will replacing ours supposes, will not hold but will break in the hour of trial. God is a Will, a righteous Will, and as it is the very nature of a will to act, to work, He would act, work, in us and through us, act and work righteousness, and only if we acquiesce in this purpose of God, only if we say to Him sincerely in our lives as well as with our lips, "Thy Will be done," only then will the blessed aim of Christ's redeeming love and sufferings be accomplished in us, and we shall never be put to shame.

For a man thus to renounce his own will in favour of the Will of God, so far from implying any loss of true manhood, any peculiar weakness or defect of manhood, is to accept and realise his only true state as a moral being, so that the more complete his renunciation the more perfect a man is he. We sometimes hear men in prayer confess it as a sin, "that they cannot of themselves think any good thought or will any good deed," but such inability is no sin, is, on the contrary, the very condition of true moral action in a creature, was in Adam before the fall, and is in every angel now. Were the highest angel to fancy it could think a good thought of itself, and will a good act otherwise than through the Divine Will, the very fancy would be the fall of that angel. Out of God's Will there is no moral strength for man or angel. A will, a strong will, is what we all need. There is no better endowment. Were it given me to choose between a strong and sound intellect and a strong and right will, I should, without hesitation, prefer the latter. I know nothing more lamentable than the spectacle

of a man of good intellect but of feeble will, who is afraid of the anger of this man or of losing the favour of that, who cannot be trusted, who deceives others and is untrue to himself, not from ignorance of the right or from malice or to gain any decided personal advantage, but from mere weakness of character, weakness of will. We need a strong will, but if such a will in us be anything else than a strong cleaving to the Will of God, if it be merely a strong will of our own, it can be only a selfish, proud, obstinate will. We need a strong will, but strong in righteousness, and so free from selfishness, pride, and obstinacy; and that we shall only find in the strong and holy Will of God, in our resolute self-surrender in all things to that Will.

In the next place, the text sets before us the one true ideal of spiritual life. It shows all of us what we ought to aim at and strive after as rational, moral, and religious beings. It shows us the one worthy goal of life and the one way to it. That is an immense service. A man who aims at nothing will accomplish nothing; a man who aims at what is impossible must be baffled and disappointed; a man who strives after what is unreasonable must prove himself a fool; a man who seeks what is vicious and degrading must work out his own condemnation and disgrace. A man's actual life always corresponds so far to his ideal of life; it is in a measure high or low, mean or noble, as that is. The conduct may, indeed, fall very far short of the ideal of conduct which the mind has had before it, but it never rises above it and is never wholly out of relation to it. I know not what fates and fortunes may have been ordained for any of you young men here present, but this I know, that, whatever your outward circumstances may be, your real lives will be very much what you sincerely wish them to be and honestly strive to make them; and that I consequently can give you no better advice than that you should set before yourselves now, at the most appropriate age and season for doing so, the highest ideal of life which you can form, and cleave to it henceforth with all your heart and strength and soul and mind. But of such an ideal the fundamental and ruling principle can only be that which pervades the Lord's Prayer and which finds clear and explicit

expression in this petition in particular: it must be the principle of self-sacrifice. It cannot be that of self-gratification; it cannot be the living for pleasure, wealth, influence, or fame. For the rational and immortal soul to make any of these its end is manifestly to degrade and debase itself. No one not utterly unworthy of bearing the name of student, or being a member of any of the liberal professions, can need to be reminded that the soul itself is far greater than these things, and can never have been meant to be used as a mere instrument for the attainment of these things.

Self-culture is a much higher aim than self-gratification, but it is still far below the truth, and none need more to be warned of this than those who are occupied as most of you are. It is the special temptation of persons who are engaged in the pursuit of learning and science to believe that they can attain the end of life by the culture and discipline of their various powers of thought and feeling. They forget that the end of life is not in thought or feeling; that the culture which stops short at thinking and feeling is superficial and incomplete even as culture; that the thought or feeling which a man cannot embody in action he possesses imperfectly, and that the thought or feeling which he does not embody in action is no part of his essential self. Culture, so far as true, transforms itself into character, and character into conduct. What is ultimate in man is a will, and his chief end must be in the exertion of will, in doing—such doing as springs from true thinking and pure feeling. Still more do those who make self-culture an end and not a means forget that there is a self in us which ought not to be cultivated, but to be got rid of, and that that self is the very root of our natural life, and can by no means be cast out by the mere discipline and training of our natural powers. Mere self-culture, culture in the strength of self, and for the sake of self, leaves in us the selfish will which misdirects and abuses all the powers of the mind, however trained and refined they may be. Therefore, with Divine wisdom, the Gospel enjoins not the self-culture which excludes self-sacrifice, but the self-sacrifice which includes all true self-culture.

To die to self; to use our own will merely for acquiescence

in God's Will; to hold our whole possessions, time, and talents as means whereby to do His work in the world; to offer our all of existence, without reservation of one thought or feeling, as a gift to Him—this, and this alone, if the Gospel be true, is the great duty and end of life. This is the ideal and law for every human being, and indeed for every spiritual being in the whole universe of God. The same physical laws which rule on earth are known to prevail in the myriads of worlds which people space, and still more certain is it that the moral law is universal in its sway. Of the angelic hosts the one great fact we are made acquainted with is that "They do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word"; and it suffices to show that there is an essential community of nature between them and us, on which may be founded a communion of interest and sympathy, and which explains why they should desire to look into the mysteries of redeeming love, and why they should rejoice over a sinner who repenteth. The ideal of life for the highest angel and for the lowest man is essentially the same; it is the acceptance of the Will of God as the sole law of their lives; it is life not to themselves but to God. While thus comprehensive, while thus inclusive of all moral beings, whether angels or men, it is an ideal which is at the same time special and even individual, demanding of each one of us that we act in that particular way in which our action will be most efficient for good, for the glory of God. God has given us very different abilities and aptitudes, and in all the resulting inequalities and diversities He has a meaning and a purpose. He has a plan for each one of us which it is our duty to discover; a work for each one of us which we are bound to do. It will be well for us if we accept His will towards us by adopting His plan and doing His work; for His will towards us is full of grace and love; and glory, honour, and immortality lie before those who follow its guidance.

It is enough merely to remind you, further, that the petition pledges us to try to spread the knowledge and love of the Will of God. If we believe that the Will of God is the only true and good law for men; that obedience to it is life, that disobedience to it is death; that the whole conduct of men to one another ought to be regulated by it; that it forbids every-

thing unjust and cruel, and enjoins everything good, everything calculated to diffuse happiness on earth, and to lead to happiness in heaven; we must feel bound by every moral motive to let our brethren of mankind know it, and to commend it to their approval and obedience; and this petition implying or embodying all this pledges us to live such lives as will most honour God's Will, and let the power of it be best seen, and to make all efforts we can that those to whom our influence reaches should be induced to submit to it.

Our text further tells us, I remark in conclusion, how we ought to do God's Will. It tells us His Will should be done on earth *as it is done in heaven*. The perfect doing of it is what we ought to aim at: ambition so often appears in selfish and unworthy forms that we are apt to overlook that there is a noble and unselfish ambition which lies at the root of all excellence in life and work, and which, so far from being allied to pride, is inseparable from humility. The ambition which seeks merely to outstrip others or to gain their applause, and to carry off outward honours and distinctions, is a principle which one may not condemn, perhaps, in young and immature minds; but which is contemptible in a grown man; and which most assuredly is never appealed to in the school of Christ. But the ambition which has no reference to others, which is entirely distinct from emulation and the desire of superiority, which has its source solely in a keen susceptibility to our own imperfections, and consists exclusively of aspiration after perfection in life and work, has not only been the source of all that is best and most enduring in art and literature, science and philosophy, but has been the inspiring principle of all the achievements of piety and virtue, of all spiritual grandeur, and of all Christian heroism and devotion.

If the spirit of this petition, "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven," be in any man, he will never cease striving to become a better man, and to do his work better, so long as he can find a fault or defect either in himself or in his work. He will not compare himself with other men and be satisfied if he is not obeying God's Will worse than they are doing. He will look above earth, as we are in this petition taught to do, and will see in heaven the true standard of his obedience.

As angels do the Father's Will in heaven, so should we do it on earth. And how do they do it? "They excel in strength," says the Psalmist, "and obey His commandments." They put out their whole strength on that—"doing His commandments." They have no other use for their strength, and make no other use of it. All their natural power, all their affection, and all their intelligence are fully occupied with that. Such is the obedience we are to aspire after. God give us grace to do so, for if we do and faint not we shall gradually approach it, and at length attain unto it, even at that time when we are admitted into the society of the angels who are in heaven. And now may God bless unto us His word, and work in us His holy Will. Amen.

## X.

### ONE THING NEEDFUL, AND ONE THING TO BE DONE.<sup>1</sup>

“But one thing is needful.”—LUKE x. 42.

“This one thing I do.”—PHILIPPIANS iii. 13.

I BRING the words of our Lord in the first of these verses and those of St Paul in the second of these verses into connection, because “the one thing” which is spoken of both by the Master and His servant is the same thing, only looked at in two slightly different aspects, and because it is the thing concerning which I wish to speak to you, with all sincerity and earnestness, at this time.

In both cases by the “one thing” is meant the blessed and holy life made accessible to us through Christ and in Christ; but in the former case that life is regarded as the alone adequate satisfaction of all desire, and in the latter as the one great end of all exertion. The words, “But one thing is needful,” are among the words of our Lord in His rebuke of Martha. She was letting the many little things which she thought needful for His proper entertainment fret her temper, make her impatient with her sister, and deprive herself of the spiritual benefit which His visit gave her such an opportunity of receiving, and so when her own complaint against Mary gave Him the most fitting occasion, gently and faithfully the Great Teacher reminded her that the many things which were troubling her were not worth being troubled about, while there *was* one thing worth all her care, the very one which she was losing sight of in the many, the one good thing which would never be taken away.

The words, “This one thing I do,” occur in an argument of St Paul warning the Philippians to beware of those false teachers who tempted them to look for salvation from circumcision and the law, and those evil workers who went by Christ’s

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Leonard’s Church, St Andrews.

name and yet felt no shame in making a God of their belly and minding earthly things. He says he himself had had more reason than any of these to trust for acceptance with God, as he had been born a Hebrew of the Hebrews, been zealous for the old law, and blameless as touching its righteousness; yet now he counted these things but loss, great gain although they had once seemed to him, and willingly renounced them, and was glad to forget all that lay behind, for there was *one thing* before him in comparison with which all things else were worthless and vile. That one thing was the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. He confessed himself unworthy of it and counted himself not yet to have apprehended it, but to apprehend and gain it was the one thing he felt that was worth doing, the one thing he wished or tried to do. That his resolution may be yours and mine,—that feeling like him “but one thing needful,” we may like him concentrate our energies on the doing of that “one thing,”—may God grant.

There is, then, one thing needed, and there is one thing to be done. There is one thing to be done because there is one thing needed. Those who do not feel the need of the one thing will never do that one thing. What they feel no want of they will not desire, and what they do not desire they will not strive and labour to attain. Now, there are some who do not at all feel that there is one thing needed, and, consequently, one thing to be done; some who have no one great desire and no one fixed aim in life; some so distracted by the many passions of their own hearts, and so bewildered among the many objects which appeal to these passions, as not to feel that their natures were made to be ruled and their lives meant to be pervaded by one supreme central and guiding principle. It is especially the danger and fault of youth to be drawn easily in the most diverse directions, to yield to the most inconsistent impulses, to read and learn, talk and enjoy, work and play, without any due sense of how the many things done are related to one another and to any worthy end beyond themselves, and beyond the hour in which they are performed. In a word, their special danger and fault is to live without plan and purpose. Very probably there are several here whose great error this is.



Yet there can be no need to dwell either on the folly or sin of it. For of this I am sure, that if they will but go a little way beyond their merely surface feelings, a little way down into the secret places of their hearts, they will find that they are themselves conscious both of the folly and of the sin of it; that although they may be feeling whatever pleasantness there is in taking life and its responsibilities as lightly as they do just now, they yet shrink from the thought of their being found even at middle age still drifting thus, without a will of their own, they know not where, at the mercy of every wind and wave, and can even now readily believe that in a few short years they may be regretting all time thus spent as a precious season wasted, which they would gladly recall but cannot.

All but the most frivolous even of worldly men soon come to learn from experience that human nature without a ruling passion is weak and contemptible, and that human life if aimless can result only in sorrow and shame; while to have the will and the power to concentrate the energies on the seeking and doing of one thing is to have the secret of all success—is the one condition on which man can do anything great. Indeed this truth is one which worldly men in general see more clearly and act on more faithfully than Christians. It is a main respect in which the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light that they see more distinctly the goal they would be at, turn their eyes less away from it, and press more directly and perseveringly towards it, than the latter do as regards the far nobler one set before them. It is not, I think, as a rule, in their not feeling that one thing is needful and that one thing is to be done that men of the world, at least after a certain age, err and are to blame, but that they propose to themselves as the chief end of their lives something altogether unworthy of being the chief end of a human soul, something which is not the good part and will assuredly be taken away, something infinitely short of the prize of that high calling which God has in Christ for every human soul.

Thus there is a great multitude, the common multitude, who keep constantly asking, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" a great multi-

tude whose whole affections and energies are confined to the procuring of a maintenance, to the bettering of their outward condition, to the acquisition of wealth or position or influence. They throw themselves not only energetically—that might be quite right—but, what can never be right, entirely into the pursuit of these things, seeking them with an exclusive desire and devotion, with the whole heart and soul, to the forgetfulness, neglect, and rejection of things far better and far more needful. Nothing can be more common than this, and yet nothing can be more foolish. It is labour in vain, the spending of the life and strength of the soul for the temporary support and advantage of the body. A spiritual nature cannot be satisfied with material good. The needs and cravings of a being meant for a heavenly and eternal existence cannot be supplied out of earthly and perishing sources. It is only when the soul is in sorest want and deepest degradation, only when far away from its proper home, its father's house, it is starving in a foreign land where a great famine prevails, that it tries to fill itself with such swine's husks as these. And it tries, of course, only to fail; for although the gratifications of the lower appetites may dull the sense, may deaden for a time the gnawing pain of spiritual hunger, they can never possibly truly satisfy the soul. There is nothing in them to respond to what is highest and best in us; to faith and hope, adoration and love, the faculties in the exercise of which we truly live.

I willingly believe, however, that those of my hearers whom I wish to have especially in my thoughts at present,—those who are still, as it were, on the threshold of life,—are just those who are least likely to belong to this multitude, and most likely to feel the vanity and meanness of such a life as it leads. All generous young minds must. The culture, the aspirations, the affections of their condition and age make it impossible for them not to recognise at a glance that the life of the mere worldling is lamentably narrow and low, and can never be what God designed man for. They are conscious of having in themselves a great wealth of faculties and feelings for which there would be no place or use in a life of the kind. And yet how often do such as they settle down into just such a life? The prodigal in the parable when he left his Father's house, rich

with the goods which his Father had given him, never dreamt, you may be sure, that he would come to feed swine, and try to appease his hunger with swine's food; and yet he came to it, gradually and naturally, in consequence of his turning his back on his Father's house, and throwing off his Father's guidance, and taking his own way. Like that prodigal, many a youth who started rich in high thoughts and generous feelings, through making the fatal mistake of trying to live away from God has gradually wasted them all, has gradually grown poorer in mind and heart, and at last become among the most worldly of worldlings. Therefore, O young men, if you would not become what you now honestly and justly despise; if you would gladly on the contrary leave the world a little less worldly than you have found it, beware of that first and most fatally wrong step of turning away from God, instead of turning to Him, that He may preserve and increase in you every good and generous feeling, and may not leave you to your own wills, to waste them and work out your own ruin.

There are some, although by no means so many, who seek to find satisfaction for all their wishes, and work for all their energies in an intellectual life, in the exercise of thought, in the search after truth, and yet while rising thus high in desire and aim do not yield themselves to the love and obedience of the God of truth. These, too, mistake as to the one thing needful, and fail to press towards the one true prize of life. Mere truth—truth apprehended, not as the thought and affection and will of God, but as in itself—will not satisfy the human heart. Suppose a man knew not only all that science has at present to tell, but all that it will ever be able to tell about the world of matter and the mind of man, would it be reasonable to expect that fully to satisfy him? I think not. Were all that is to be known about the material universe actually known, the man who knew it would simply have within himself the true reflection of what was existing without him—on his spirit which thinks there would simply be a correct picture of that which does not think. Now, I cannot believe that the soul, which would not be satisfied with the very world itself could it have it, will ever be satisfied with that pale reflection of it which constitutes science, and which can only be to the reality as

moonlight is to sunlight. I cannot believe that the soul, which is itself so superior every way to the material world, can have for its highest end, merely to serve as a mirror to it, and to show forth, not the likeness and glory of God, but the image or reflection of what is without life, without reason, and without love. And were all that is to be known about the mind of man actually known, the soul which knew it would, after all, only have a knowledge of itself, and surely only a fool would have it rest in complacent contemplation, or bow down in adoration of that. Indeed, a soul which really knew itself, which clearly saw itself as it is in itself, away from the grace and mercy of God, could do neither, but would be overwhelmed by its knowledge with shame and terror.

The wisdom of the world now, as in the days of St Paul, is foolishness with God, and seen to be foolishness when reason looks at it in the true light, which is that which comes from God; and there is no part of the wisdom of the present day more dangerously foolish than that which sets forth science, culture, truth, as all-sufficient ends of life. Apart from the love and service of God these may lead the soul into a land as waste and famishing as the pursuit of what only concerns the body. They may even lead it into a still more howling and hungry wilderness. There is on earth a greater misfortune than to crave for bread and not to have it, and a sadness more complete than that of bereavement, sickness, poverty, even pushed to their extremest limits. There is the bitterness of a soul which has studied, and searched, and speculated; which has pursued truth in many directions with eager and anxious heart; and yet, because it sought it apart from the light and life which are in God, has only found in all directions doubt and nothingness. This bitterness may you be spared, this weariness of life, this disbelief in any good, by letting God guide you in the culture of your minds and the search for truth, as aware that there is no wise education or true knowledge separate from His operation and blessing.

God has, my friends, a better portion for you, even the one thing needful of which Christ spoke; a higher calling for you, even that one thing which the Apostle did. Do you ask, What is it? It is to accept like Mary, Martha's sister, the message

of Christ as the Revealer of the Father's character and will; it is to try to realise it like St Paul in a life which flows from the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, and is devoted to the glory of God. It is to know, believe, and do the gracious will of our Heavenly Father towards ourselves and towards our fellow-men. It is to receive and close with that special offer of forgiveness and strength which Jesus Christ brought from heaven, which He sealed by the sacrifice of Himself, and lives to make effectual by the gift of His Spirit. It is to be, in consequence, not alien from God, but in communion with Him, both in our secret thoughts and outward deeds; to be on His side in the great conflict between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, in the world; to be doing what in us lies to make Christ better known, more honoured, and more loved by those around us, because we honour and love Him in our own souls; it is by patient continuance in well-doing, undismayed by opposition and unwearied by failure, to advance, each of us in his own sphere, that Kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

This is the one thing. It is the sole one thing which can satisfy our every desire and be the true and adequate end of our every energy. It is so in opposition to the *many* things not needful and not to be done. It is so as contrasted with these, as excluding these. It was opposed by our Lord to the many things which cumbered Martha. It was opposed, St Paul felt, to all such remembrance of the past as tended to paralyse his Christian exertions and impede his Christian progress; and so, to gain the aim on which he was intent, he tells us, he forgot the things behind,—would not so much as think of them. To believe and obey the Gospel, the doing of that is our “one need,” because it is so unspeakably above and before every other need in urgency, that any desire, any action, which conflicts with it, with the full and entire satisfaction of it, is a desire which we are to refuse to gratify, an action which we are to refuse to perform. It is simply because we do not sufficiently realise the position we are in as related to God and eternity, and so do not feel as we ought our need of the Gospel, that we fancy we have need of many things besides the Gospel.

But the one thing needed and the one thing to be done is not only so as excluding all that is not needed and not to be done, the countless crowd of things which we fancy good yet are really hurtful, but as including all that is truly useful, all that is in the highest and best sense profitable for us and others. It excluded the many things belonging to the much preparation with which Martha mistakingly cumbered herself. It would have included, however, everything required for such attention to the bodily wants and entertainment of the Lord as He Himself would have wished. It did not more certainly exclude the excessive and cumbersome than it would have included whatever was reasonable and right. It made St Paul forget and lay aside much, but it also made him use every means and strain his every faculty to gain his end. It does not in the least follow that because the Christian keeps ever one end or aim before him he must be a man of one idea, of a one-sided mind or life. It is, on the contrary, just that which fits the Christian life to be the "one thing" for every man; that "one thing" in which the broadest minds, the most generous hearts, the most energetic natures may find the amplest scope for all their thoughts, affections, and activities. Nothing is either so great or so little as not to be able to be included in it. It admits of everything, it demands everything, which tends to the perfection of our nature and the glory of God.

It includes, then, all that is needful, and all that ought to be done, and excludes all that is needless and which it would only harm us to do. It is thus that it is the one thing, and it is obvious that to choose it must both simplify and strengthen life immensely. It determines both what is to be done and what is to be left undone. By making us men of a single purpose and aim, by fixing our desires on one single thing, the largest, highest, most desirable and most precious conceivable, it does away at once with a vast amount of what would otherwise be hopeless complication and confusion, the source of bewilderment, vacillation, and weakness. If we knew that any man here—and especially any young man here—had firmly resolved that, through God's grace, come what may, he would do this *one* thing, the will of God; that,

whatever came in conflict therewith, be it in himself or the world, he would oppose it; and that whatever conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit told him that will demanded, he would at all hazards do; then should we know also that, although his life might prove no pleasant one, yet would it be a right manly life, one which even those whom it offended most would be compelled to respect because of its singleness, its consistency, its concentration, its simplicity, its strength. Such a man's life, whatever self-denial, whatever hardship it may involve, the heart instinctively feels to be the noblest thing on earth. And yet how few live thus. How few there are, even of those who profess the faith of Christ, who are like St Paul doing just that one thing which makes human nature grand and human life noble; and how many there are like Martha minding more the many things which make nature little and life mean. It is the best wish I can have for you all that you may resolve to be numbered among the worthier few whom God uses as His salt to preserve and savour the earth; as lights to dispel the surrounding darkness.

Set your hearts on the one thing needful, the true chief end of life, and pray God to keep it there morning, noon, and night. Make up your minds not to aim at many things, or even at two things, but at one. Do not try to solve the hopeless problem, How to make the best of both worlds? but be content to lose, if God will, the earthly world in order to win the heavenly. You cannot serve two masters, you cannot live with two objects, although thousands are foolishly trying to do it. This so-called world of earth is no true world, but only a fragment of God's rightful world. The only two worlds I know of are the world of light and of life, and the world of darkness and of death—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—and to the one you ought wholly to belong, and to the other you ought to be wholly hostile. To live completely in the one and completely out of the other is just the one thing needed and the one thing to be done.

Strive and pray also that your aim may not only be thus clear, but that your resolution may be steady and constant. It is in that that many fail. They see the object but they have not the firmness to make for it. They know what the

true end of life is, and they are too clear-sighted to substitute another end for it, and yet they are at the mercy of a weak will, of an infirm purpose, so that they cannot do the thing that they would. These are very sorrowful cases. Combined with true instincts and genuine impulses of good, with warm affections, and it may be holy desires, there is a weakness and a bias in the nature which makes all else useless, and causes the man whose eye is set on heaven to drift helplessly and hopelessly into the abyss of spiritual ruin. Strive and pray, therefore, for that grace of a strong and steadfast will without which piety is impossible and hope a delusion.

And seek yet further a high and holy zeal in the doing of this one great and glorious thing which is to be your life work. Like St Paul, *press* towards the mark: like St Paul, run with all the eagerness and speed God is willing to give you. The goal which you have before you is the utmost and highest degree of perfection you can attain. God will give you strength enough to reach it, but not more than enough; time enough to reach it, but none to waste. You are as a traveller the end of whose journey is at once so important and so remote that he must allow nothing to divert him from his path or to arrest or interrupt him on it. Pain and pleasure, good fortune and bad, will, if he is wise, be regarded by him as merely incidents of his journey. The wind blows, the rain falls, the traveller wraps his cloak around him and struggles on; the storm passes off, the sunshine breaks forth and warms his numbed limbs, he smiles with pleasure and thanks God in his heart; but neither storm nor sunshine changes or stops his course. Be ye such travellers. Press continuously, resolutely, zealously onwards.

“From strength to strength go on;  
 Wrestle, and fight, and pray;  
 Tread all the powers of darkness down,  
 And win the well-fought day;  
 That having all things done,  
 And all your conflicts past,  
 Ye may o’ercome through Christ alone,  
 And stand complete at last.”

May God add His blessing to what has been said, and to His name be glory for ever. Amen.



## XI.

### BEHOLDING THE WONDERS OF GOD'S LAW.<sup>1</sup>

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”—PSALM cxix. 18.

THE man who uttered these words felt that he was under Divine law; that clearly to see the glory of that law was a matter of supreme importance to him; and that he could only hope to see it through God being pleased to enable him to see it. He did not feel that he was without a law, and so he did not pray for a law. He felt, on the contrary, that he was most assuredly under a law, and a wonderful law,—one worthy of God and of the most awful interest to man. He felt that he knew it but badly and that it deeply concerned him to know it well; that to realise its sublimity and comprehensiveness, its marvellous wisdom, its perfect righteousness, would be light and strength and life to his soul; but that so to realise it God must vouchsafe to him a sacred influence, a spiritual enlightenment. And he had sufficient faith in His God to believe that He was able and willing thus to help him;—sufficient faith to believe that he might without presumption, irreverence, or fear, pray that God would guide him to a correct acquaintance with His blessed will. All that led him thus to pray, however, still exists to lead us to offer up with as much sincerity and earnestness the same prayer, and the design of whatever I have to say at this time is to help you to realise your need of thus praying without ceasing, or, in other words, of living continually in the spirit of this prayer, longing with your whole hearts to have the eyes of your minds at all times kept divinely open, to behold wondrous things out of God's law. May God grant that what I have to say fail not wholly of this aim.

<sup>1</sup> Preached in Lady Yester's Church, Edinburgh, before an audience consisting largely of students.

I may begin, then, by remarking that there are assuredly countless wonders to be beheld in God's law, had we only open eyes to behold them. There is nothing so wonderful as God's law; nay, it may justly be said to include in itself all that is most wonderful—all that truly merits our admiration—all that will really reward our curiosity. For what is it? The Psalmist here was not thinking merely of the law given to Moses or of the words written in any book, however sacred. He was not thinking of spoken words or written characters, but of eternal realities. He was an earnest man, and his mind sought to be in contact with truth itself; he was a pious man, and his heart longed for nothing less or lower than communion with the living God. He felt himself in the Divine presence, and he felt that the Divine Law was within and around him. The Bible tells us much about the law of God, but it is only by a figure of speech that we call it the law of God or even say that it contains the law of God. In the Bible and other books we have the statements of God's laws, but these laws themselves are far too real to be in any book.

I read in the Bible, for example, that God has "set His glory in the heavens," but in merely reading this I do not see that glory; it is only to be seen by "considering the heavens, which are the work of God's fingers; the moon and the stars, which He has ordained." This terrible law—"the wages of sin is death"—has been published in the Bible but it does not exist and work in the Bible; it exists and works in the lives of sinful beings like you and me, and if we do not see it in ourselves we shall never see it at all, although we read a thousand times the words which announce it. So with its gracious counterpart,—“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.” These blessed words point us to the most consoling law in all the universe, but they point us away from themselves, and only by our souls coming into communion with a living God through a living Saviour can they behold the wonders of mercy and truth which are in that law.

No law of God, natural or spiritual, can be shut up in a book. The law of God is what keeps the stars in their courses, what regulates the movements of the seas and the revolutions of the earth, what develops the plant and orga-

nises the animal, works in our instincts and guides our reasons, marks out the path of humanity and determines the rise and fall, the weal and woe, of nations, and measures out to virtue and vice their due rewards in time and eternity. It is not truly separable from God Himself, but is the whole of the modes in which He manifests His power, and wisdom, and goodness in the universe,—the whole of the ways in which He operates through matter and spirit, in creation, providence, and redemption, as Father and King and Judge. Hence it is that I say it is not only most wonderful but includes in itself all that is wonderful. The wonders of physical nature, of the human soul and human history, and of redeeming love and grace, are all wonders of that law of God which the Psalmist longed and prayed to behold,—that law which ruleth alike in what is least and greatest,—to which all things in heaven and earth do homage,—the seat of which is the bosom of the Eternal,—the voice of which is the harmony of the universe. There is no science cultivated among us which can have anything else for its highest aim than simply to discover and exhibit some part of the Divine Law. The end of every kind of study worthy of our engaging in is, directly or indirectly, to extend our knowledge of laws, which we distinguish from one another by calling laws of astronomy or chemistry, laws of language or history, physical, moral, or spiritual laws, but which all agree in being laws of God, the operations of His will, the expressions of His character, the rules which He has implanted in His creatures and assigned to them as the conditions and limits of their workings.

We are apt, however, not to feel thus, and our reasons for seeking knowledge are apt to be not thus pious and elevated, but selfish and mean, and then knowledge is degraded, and the life occupied in acquiring it loses all dignity and worth. And this leads me to what I wish to remark on next, viz. that men are prone to separate in their thoughts what are inseparable in fact, God from His law, and to feel as if He had no connection with the law and the law had no connection with Him. And the forms of this error are two, for some lose sight of God while studying the wonders of the law, and others overlook or despise the wonders of the law while

anxious to behold God. Both of these are great dangers. The ocean of life, perhaps, contains none greater. On both many noble and hopeful minds have been wrecked. And in no age, probably, have so many been thus lost as in our own. In order to avoid them men had never more urgent need than now to pray—"Open Thou mine eyes,"—and to watch as well as pray.

There are some, then, who lose sight of God while beholding the wonders of the law. There are some—alas, in our days there are many—the chief occupation of whose life is to discover and declare what are the laws of the world, and yet who do not feel, nay, who deny, that these laws are God's laws, and maintain that they can find no reason for believing in the existence or working of God. One of the greatest astronomers who ever lived pronounced in the name of his science the belief in God a useless hypothesis. A thinker who has exerted an extraordinary influence on recent opinion affirmed that the heavens declare no other glory than that of Laplace and Newton. No week passes but we may read in newspaper or magazine, pamphlet or book, assertions or reasonings of men, whose scientific eminence is undoubted, to the effect that matter and force alone can account for whatever of law and order is to be seen in the physical world, and that there is nowhere to be seen in it any evidence of a God. And this blindness to the presence of God on the part of those whose minds are most occupied with the study of His laws is in no way confined to those who are chiefly interested in the material universe. In proportion to the whole number engaged in the study of mind, there are, perhaps, as many who think there is no occasion to refer the laws of our intellects to the workings of an eternal Reason, the laws of our affections to the feelings of a Heavenly Father. It is not otherwise in regard to moral laws. Many make them the subjects of elaborate inquiry and discussion, who find in them no traces of having their source in the bosom of God. Religion itself is studied in our days with a comprehensive-ness previously unknown, its various phases from the rudest fetichism of savage tribes to the highest forms of Christianity are laboriously compared and contrasted, analysed and

connected, by men who see in it merely a series of creations of the human mind, no gradual unveiling of the Godhead.

What are we to think of all this? Doubtless it might well raise many thoughts, but scarcely one, I think, more certainly true or practically important than that our intellectual perception of law is one thing and our spiritual perception of God in law is a very different thing. To see law itself we need only a clear and disciplined understanding. To see God in law we need spiritual discernment. The eye sees only what it brings with it the power of seeing. And neither mere bodily vision nor mere intellectual vision will enable us to behold spiritual reality. The things of the spirit must be spiritually discerned. When on a serene night millions of stars sparkle in the depths of the sky, any man who has bodily eyes, although he may have no talent and no culture, has only to raise them upwards to embrace at a glance all the splendours of the firmament, and thereby to receive into his soul, at least in some measure, the impressions which so sublime a spectacle is fitted to produce. But there may stand beside him one whose intellectual ability is far greater, and who has improved that ability to the utmost by diligent and carefully directed exercise, yet if Providence have denied to him the blessing of sight, in vain for him will there be all that magnificence. There is another sky, and one far grander than the azure vault which is stretched over our heads, and this mystic sky is filled with the stars of Divine truth, the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of infinite wisdom, the bounties of Divine beneficence, the beauties of absolute holiness, the marvels of redeeming love, the riches of the Godhead, the glories of Father, Son, and Spirit, shining far more bright and pure than the sun at noonday. And yet to great men, to the wise of this world, to the most scholarly and the most scientific of men, they may be quite invisible, although they are lighting up with their divine radiance the path of the simple peasant and causing his heart to leap and sing with joy as he beholds them.

Let no one of us think, then, that by mere force of study, by the mere unaided exertion of the understanding, he may count with confidence on coming at length to see all that is to be seen of God in the laws of the universe. A man might

know all that is to be known of the laws of matter, mind, and history, and strain to exhaustion the intellectual powers by which he had acquired this knowledge in order to derive from it a certainty of God's presence, power, wisdom, and love, and yet utterly fail. There must be a certain illumination, a certain opening of the spiritual eye, which can only come from God Himself, before we can have any true view of God. Without this no sacredness in His laws themselves will suffice to cause us to see God in them.

But to forget God while we are occupied with His law is not our only danger. There is another scarcely less serious. It is to treat His law as not worth looking at while we pretend to desire to behold Himself. And this is what many people do. They are very ready to cry out about the atheism and impiety of the scientific men who express such sentiments as I have been referring to, and very emphatically profess their own faith that the world is the work of God and its laws but His modes of action, yet show the profoundest indifference as to what its character and laws are. Now, I cannot see that these persons are much better than those whom they blame. It is no doubt most lamentable that any man should be so far left to himself as to affirm that the heavens declare no other glory than that of Newton and Laplace, but is it much more lamentable than that men who profess to believe that "the heavens declare the glory of God," and who live in an age when any man who can read may acquire in two or three hours a knowledge of the wonders of God's law and glory in the heavens such as the Psalmist had no conception of, should refuse to take even the slight trouble necessary? The atheistical astronomer at least realises that the law, so far as it comes within the range of his science, is very wonderful and tries to let his fellow-men know how wonderful it is, and thus, even while not acknowledging it to be God's law, unconsciously and unwillingly glorifies God by his admiration of it; but he who, knowing it to be divine, turns from its wonders with indifference, thereby dishonours Him whom he professes to reverence. If a little less blind than the atheist, he is much more inconsistent.

If we really believed all the laws of the universe to be the

expressions of God's character, the ways in which His will works, we should welcome all discoveries regarding them, all light, from whatever quarter coming, concerning any one of them. We should feel that every new truth we can learn must necessarily be a means of increasing our knowledge of God. But I need scarcely say that a great many professing believers have no such feeling, no such faith, and that it is just the want of this faith in those who ought to have it which has done more harm to the cause of religion among intellectual men than all other causes together. Scarcely can any new truth be announced or new theory raised in any department of inquiry but you find persons rushing forward to assail it under the fear that if it be established religion will be injured or ruined. Let us cast utterly out of our minds every fear of this kind. Nothing ever will be established which will do religion anything else than good. Nothing ever will be brought to light which will do God anything else than honour. The more His works and ways are inquired into the more wondrous will they appear, the more glorious and good will He be found to be. It is not faith in God, but the want of it, which causes any man to look upon nature or science with distrust or aversion or even with indifference. Faith is the confidence that God is true, that all truth is from God, and so that truth of its very nature tends to raise the mind to God and to help it to form a larger and juster conception of His character and ways. Therefore, we shall do well to desire and pray for a keener interest, and a more deeply and directly religious interest, in all truth accessible to us, or, in other words, for eyes more open to the wonders of God's law in the very widest sense of that term.

And now it is high time for me to observe that while all the laws of God should, as far as possible, be objects of interest and admiration to us, these laws are not all of the same practical importance to us. There are many of them which we must all be ignorant of, and which we may safely be ignorant of. There are many of them which we might know had we only time to make ourselves acquainted with them, yet we cannot, consistently with duty, spare the time necessary to ascertain them. On the other hand, there is a class of laws of awful significance to us, which we must on no account be ignorant of, and the

wonders of which we must on no plea excuse ourselves from striving to behold clearly and steadily, and in the marvellous light which God has been pleased to throw around them. The laws which regulate the movements of the heavenly bodies and those which regulate chemical combinations are undoubtedly full of interest both in themselves and as illustrations of God's power and wisdom, and if, without too serious a sacrifice, we can learn what they are, let us do so even as a religious exercise and duty; still, after all, they concern us little in comparison with the laws which God has given us for the regulation of our own lives. The laws of astronomy are, of course, all-important for the planets; the laws of chemistry are, of course, all-important for such things as oxygen and hydrogen; but, as we are neither astronomical bodies nor chemical elements, but rational, moral, and religious beings under spiritual laws, by conforming to which we shall glorify God, bless our fellow-creatures, and secure for ourselves honour and immortality, while by violating them we shall offend God, hurt our fellows both in their bodies and souls, and ruin ourselves both for time and eternity, manifestly these spiritual laws, the laws of rational and peaceable, of righteous and holy, living, are of infinitely greater moment to us. And clearly it was mainly these laws, or what he also describes as the commandments, the statutes, and precepts of God, His righteous judgments and His testimonies, that the Psalmist prayed to behold; and it is mainly these laws that every pious man will pray to behold, feeling, as he must, that if ignorant of them, if blind to their wonders, the clearest beholding of the wonders of all the other laws in the universe will not avail him, nay, will only in the end turn to his condemnation.

In reality, whether we see it or not, there is far more that is wonderful in these laws than in any other. They are, for example, the laws of God in a far higher sense than other laws. The laws of the physical world might have been quite different from what they are. God made them to be what they are by making the physical world itself what it is. If He had made quite a different material world with quite other laws, He would have been none the less God, the true object of our worship. But He did not make the fundamental laws of moral



life to be what they are by any mere forthputting of His will. They are eternal and unchangeable. That God should alter them would be for Him to cease to be wise, and righteous, and holy, and loving. It would be for Him to cease to be God. The wonders of these laws are thus the wonders of the Divine nature, and far greater, therefore, than any wonders of created nature. At the same time, these laws are the laws of our natures, of our spirits, of what is much higher and much more wonderful than anything else to be beheld in nature. "On earth," it has been said, "there is nothing great but man, and in man there is nothing great but mind." And certainly a soul is a far more wonderful thing than even a star, a spiritual being than a material world, and its laws far more wonderful. It is spiritual law which determines men's relations to their God and to one another, and it is on obedience or disobedience to it that the weal or woe of individuals or societies chiefly depends, so that all the marvels and mysteries of human life and destiny gather around it.

If we would see, however, its wonders in the most impressive light we must turn to Revelation. Revelation in its very nature, and from beginning to end, is a testimony to the sacredness of such law as I am now speaking of. Every miracle, every prophecy, every striking dispensation recorded in Scripture, whatever else it may have meant, was always a proclamation from God to man that they should reverence this His law. When this law was republished on Sinai it was out of blackness and darkness and tempest, amidst thunders and lightnings, upon a quaking mountain, before a trembling nation. These things were full of significance. They were no idle, theatrical thunders, meant merely to astonish and frighten a rude and barbarous people. They were the appropriate indications of the majesty of the law. Yet to that on Calvary there was borne another and far more wonderful testimony. To behold fully how wonderful the law is—how sacred God regards it to be—how terrible disobedience to it is—it is to the cross we must look; to the cross, towering high above all other objects, in the midst of the ages, in the presence of the nations, to show sin in all its hideousness and righteousness in all its perfections. If we can see no wonders in the law which Christ died to satisfy

and glorify, if we do not see it to be unspeakably more wonderful than all other law, assuredly our blindness is great indeed, and we cannot too earnestly cry to a merciful God, "Open Thou mine eyes."

All that I have thus far said has in some measure implied what I have now distinctly to state, viz. that it is not enough to have God's law before us or His truth disclosed, but we need also to have our eyes opened to see the law, our minds helped to understand the truth. The reason of man can no more act aright independently of God than his will can. If a person would do a really good action, his will must renounce itself and submit to be directed by the will of God, and equally if he would really possess the truth his reason must renounce itself and submit to be taught of God. Grace is just as much needed to control and guide the reason as to control and guide the will. Just as the will has been made to find its life in the holiness of God, reason has been made to find its life in the wisdom of God; neither of them has been so made as to have any true life apart from and independent of God.

This has been felt to be so by the wise and pious in all ages and countries. Wherever, even among the heathen, a man has attained to any decided religious thoughtfulness, he has always recognised that he and his fellow-men have no true wisdom which God has not taught them, and can only see aright the truth which ought to guide their spiritual life in the measure that their eyes are opened to see it. You know what a multitude of prayers there are in the Book of Psalms like that in the text: prayers for God to give light, to open the eyes, to make His law clear and plain. But prayers of just the same kind are almost as numerous in the Vedas, in the sacred hymns of the Hindus. You cannot read long anywhere in the Bible without coming upon some declaration referring the wise and good thoughts of men to the Spirit of the Lord, and no more can you read long in the Koran without coming on a like declaration. When the Gospel appeared, among all the objections urged against it by the heathen philosophers, no exception, so far as we know, was taken to its doctrine of a direct spiritual action of the Divine mind on the human, for that had been fully recognised not only by the greatest of their own

teachers in philosophy, but even by their popular poets, like Homer. When, therefore, our wise men nowadays would throw off this belief in the need of the Divine enlightenment of the mind as a mere Bible dogma or Christian superstition, they fall into a mistake. What they would get rid of is one of the essential wants of humanity, one of those universal convictions of the heart which must be true or our nature is a lie. Just as wherever human beings have felt their weakness, have felt all natural and human help fail them, they have instinctively turned to their God for help; so wherever human beings have been sufficiently quickened in mind to feel their ignorance, to feel their need of having greater insight into moral and religious truth, they have instinctively turned to their God for light. And doubtless not in vain.

At any rate, a heathen, however great the darkness which surrounds him, who feels the darkness and longs and prays for the light, is nearer to the light and in a less hopeless darkness than the proud and self-conceited man who thinks himself so wise, so possessed of all truth, that he has no need of God's teaching, and is greatly more intelligent than those who pray for it. There is no blindness like to the blindness of that man. Nature may ray out its truths upon him from every object, great and small, which it contains; all the centuries of civilisation may bring their lessons to him, and every means of education which human ingenuity has devised may be employed to inculcate and illustrate them; a completed Bible may be at all times open to him; the light of the cross may beat upon his eyeballs; and yet he will remain stone blind to the glorious realities which these things are disclosing to the lowly, the unlettered, almost to babes and sucklings, and will, perhaps, even say in his heart "there is no God." Unless God open our eyes, then, to behold the wonders of His law no clearness in the outward revelation of its wonders will give us a true view of them. We shall see and yet not perceive. It will be with us as it was with those Israelites to whom Moses said, "Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and the great miracles; yet"—mark that "yet"—"yet the

Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day."

Considerations like these surely show abundantly the reasonableness of praying to God, like the Psalmist, for Divine enlightenment. True prayer is the means of putting ourselves in communion with Him who can alone give inward illumination, and it is the expression of the only frame or temper of mind to which it will be granted. If prayer be true it means that he who prays feels his dependence on God, and surrenders himself to Him. And the feeling of dependence upon God for spiritual guidance, the self-surrender of the mind to be taught by Him, is just what, above all, God asks of us as a condition of our gaining spiritual perception and knowledge, for He is most willing to guide and teach us. Let us thus feel. Let us realise that all true knowledge of God's law must come from above; that, although in virtue of our freedom of will we can withdraw our powers of perception and reasoning from the Divine guidance, yet if we do so we cannot enjoy the vision and experience of Divine things. Let us with this consciousness of our natural ignorance, and in the belief that God is willing to teach us and to turn our inward gloom into glorious day, earnestly seek to have our eyes opened, and the central darkness within us dispelled, and the great blessing will not be denied us.

May God bless what now has been said. And to His name be glory for ever. Amen.

## XII.

### NONCONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD.

“And be not conformed to this world. . . .”—ROMANS xii. 2.

THE great aim of the Apostle Paul in the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans was to convince his readers that men of no race or class, neither Jews nor Gentiles, could claim eternal life on the ground of their own merits, but, in order to receive it, must be content to accept it humbly and thankfully from the grace of God. His own summary of his whole argument is, “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all.” To this mercy or grace he traces the calling, the election, the justification, the sanctification, the peace, the joys, the hopes, and, in a word, all the blessings shown by him to be included in the portion of a Christian. These glorious privileges are all mercies, pure mercies of God.

From the commencement of the twelfth chapter to the close of his epistle we find the Apostle presenting those mercies the nature and fulness of which he had previously unfolded in doctrine, as motives to Christian activity. They do not produce the effect which they ought to have if they do not produce righteous and holy living. It is accordingly on the solid foundation which these mercies supply that the Apostle raises his practical exhortations. He asks us, he beseeches us, to do thus and thus for God because of what God has done for us.

And as our first great duty, the most comprehensive of duties, he urges us to yield ourselves up in the body, with every power of action, love, and service which we possess, to God as a living sacrifice, a holy, acceptable, and rational offering. He could ask from us no more than he has thus done, for he has asked everything. He could ask from us no less,

for all this is due. Those so entirely dependent on God as we are, as all men are—who owe as we do everything to the mercies of God—can only live aright if we live wholly to God, and withhold nothing from Him.

Closely connected with this all-embracing exhortation or appeal are the injunctions in the verse from which my text is taken. They are implied in it, and they help to explain and define it. The advice not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed through renewal of the mind, tells us how we are to present to God the sacrifices of our bodies, of our own selves in the body. What is required is that through a radical change in our natures, our affections be so withdrawn from, and raised above, the world, and so surrendered and devoted to God, that our bodies, with all their living energies, organs, and members, faculties and desires, may be directed towards the accomplishment not of low and selfish aims, but of exalted and divine ones. This is the chief demand, the fundamental law, of the Christian life. He who complies with it is a Christian; he who does not is not. He who complies with it is a man of the highest type to be found on earth; he who does not, whatever good qualities he may possess, is of a lower type. And, clearly, he who complies with it must be what the Apostle meant by “not conformed to the world.”

“Be not conformed to this world,” says he; or more exactly, as in the Revised Version, “be not fashioned according to this world”—this age. The spirit of the age in which he lived was evil. The world around him lay in darkness. The Jews had rejected Messiah and were trusting in a righteousness altogether false for acceptance with God. The Gentiles were given up to superstition and vice. The world was emphatically a wicked world, alienated from God, sold under sin, enslaved by Satan. But God in His mercy had called out of it, had redeemed out of it, in and through Christ, those who received Christ. They had been brought into another world; they had been inspired with the spirit of a new age; and they were not to follow the fashion of the world out of which they had been delivered, not to be ruled by the spirit of the age which for them should be for ever past and gone.

When St Paul spoke, then, of “the world” or “age” it was

of it as a system or constitution opposed to another which he wished to see replace it; as a kingdom contrary to the kingdom of God; as the world of those who rejected Christ in contrast to the world of those who accepted Him; as an embodiment of principles which he hated. It was in the light of its principles that he looked upon it. Here, on the one hand, was Christianity with all its holy precepts, with all its rich promises, with all its gladdening prospects. There, on the other hand, were self-righteousness and heathenism, the consequences of which were ignorance, unbelief, selfishness, crime, and misery. Here was the Gospel of the Kingdom which came from God and led to eternal life. There were the false principles which ruled in the world and led to destruction. Hence St Paul exhorted men so earnestly by the mercies of God not to be conformed to the world; that is, not to act on its principles, not to regulate their lives by its spirit.

This being what he meant by the world, we see what the exhortation meant, and also what it did not mean. Some have understood it as if it required Christians to break the natural ties which bind them to society, to isolate themselves from their fellow-men, and flee to the hermit's cave or the monk's cell; or at least to set aside the common customs and arrangements of society, and to adopt peculiar ways so as to be obviously and outwardly unlike other people. This is a most mistaken view. St Paul does not exhort us to run away from or go out of the world, but not to fashion ourselves according to the spirit of it,—not to live with its life. The nonconformity to the world which he enjoins is neither withdrawal from it nor eccentricity. Without any violation of its precept, the Christian may act as men of the world do in all cases where his acting does not involve the adoption of worldly, unchristian principles.

Surrounded although the early Christians, the contemporaries of St Paul, were by a heathen society, there were yet many things which they could do in common with their heathen neighbours without accepting any article of a heathen creed or displaying any feature of a heathen spirit, and from doing no such thing did the Apostle prohibit them. He did not demand that Christians should in any respect do the opposite of what the

heathen did merely because the heathen did it. He demanded no unnecessary singularity, for instance, as to food or dress, mode of speech or mode of life. He was in his own conduct far above all littleness of that sort, and he never recommended it to others. He was, as he himself tells us, all things to all men, in order to gain them to the truth. He was too much in earnest, and had too much to do, to create unnecessary obstacles and enemies. He was willing to conform to any arrangement of society which did not include, as it were, in the very nature of it, worldliness of spirit, and so could not be transformed or sanctified by the spirit of the Gospel.

In perfect consistency, therefore, both with his example and precepts, Christians may do whatever others do, provided the principles of their faith be not compromised and the principles of the world antagonistic to them espoused. There is a kind of conformity to the world to which all may well submit. There is a certain authority in society which, within certain limits, no man of sound judgment will dream of disputing. It is surely a thing on which we may congratulate ourselves that society should take off our hands the trouble of attending to a vast number of matters of trifling moment; that it should in a general way determine for us the dress we are to wear and rules of behaviour we are to observe in different countries, and ranks, and occasions in life. A man must have either an ill-balanced mind or very little to do if, without attributing any sacredness to these decisions of society, or adhering with any scrupulosity to them, he do not quietly accept them, thankful to be thus not distracted from the real work of life by the occupation of his mind with things unworthy of it. Our Christian warfare is not against the outward forms of the world in any case where these can be separated from the evil of the world. It is against the evil life itself of the world. It is no fantastic and trivial, but a most real and momentous struggle.

It is a struggle which every Christian is still called on to maintain. The world is yet with us. It has, indeed, we thankfully acknowledge, changed since the days of St Paul. The world around him was almost entirely contrary to the kingdom of God. Now, in a professedly Christian country



like ours, the leaven of the Gospel has pervaded and more or less changed the whole constitution of society, so that in all its elements it has been brought partially within the kingdom of God and taken partially out of what St Paul called "this world." But human society is still everywhere largely worldly in the sense of evil and unchristian. Hence the exhortation to be not conformed to the world has not ceased to be as needful as ever. In one respect it is more needful than ever, because the difference between the worldly and the Christian life is now often in appearance little while in reality immense.

We have thus far seen chiefly what nonconformity to the world is not. We have now to inquire more specially what it is. How are we so to fashion our lives as not to be conformed to this world? What is positively implied in the nonconformity to this world which is enjoined?

Well, this at least is implied, that those of us who comply with the injunction belong to another world, and live there. It is implied that "this world" of sense and time is not our all; that our thoughts are not bounded by it; that our affections are not wholly or even chiefly set upon it; that we have a sphere of existence, of conscious and active existence, independent of and above it, into which we can withdraw, in which we are most at home, where the real seat and the true springs of our life are, and out of which we can come to influence, dominate, and use this world. There is implied, that is to say, in scriptural language, a life hid with Christ in God; having our conversation in heaven; citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Oh my friends, is this true of us? Is this in very fact the case with us? All depends upon it. If we are really only of this world we must be conformed to this world; if we wholly belong to it we cannot rule it, it must rule us, must fashion us according to its own evil earthly nature, instead of our fashioning it according to the holy and divine nature which we might have in God through Christ. There are many to whom this world is virtually the only one; who persistently content themselves with it; whose minds are seldom, if ever, intimately and intensely in contact with spiritual things, the realities of eternity; who have no real and abiding communion with the Father of Spirits; and for all such it is self-evident that non-

conformity to the world is an absolute impossibility. If we would not be conformed to the world, therefore, we must not be as they. We must see to it that we are really living in another and higher world, that our thoughts rise above earth, that our affections stretch beyond time, that our spirits day by day and year by year find their rest and joy in the realised presence and love of our God and Saviour.

Further, in order that we may not be conformed to this world, the spirit of the higher world to which I have been referring must manifest itself in our characters and conduct; the life which comes from God and tends to God must make itself perceptible in our dispositions and actions. What is required of us is not that we should withdraw from the world, but that we should overcome the evil of the world with good. It is that we should impress as far as we can the image of Christ on the world, and so, as far as we can, help to restore it to its lawful Lord. It is to exhibit all Christian graces in all the human relations in which we have been providentially placed. It is to exemplify the righteousness of the kingdom of God—the faith and love towards God, the compassion, long-suffering, self-sacrificing kindness, and generosity towards men, the purity, peaceableness, and justice, which are the essential laws and distinctive characteristics of the kingdom of God—where the unrighteousness of the kingdom of Satan is still prevalent, and needs to be rebuked and expelled. It is to walk as children of the light however thick around us may be the darkness.

In this respect, as in all others, we should look to Christ as our great example. He was in the world but not of it. He lived on earth and complied with all the obligations of life on earth, but kept Himself pure from all earthly defilement. He was no ascetic, no eccentric, no abnormal man; but, on the contrary, the most human of men, the perfect man, the richest in all the affections and sympathies of man. He made Himself the brother of all men as none else has ever done; humbled Himself and sacrificed Himself to serve and save them as none else has ever done; bore their burdens, felt their griefs, took on Himself their infirmities as none else has ever done; and yet, through being and doing all this, He

only showed Himself all the more wonderfully separate from sinners and separate from the world, all the more absolutely holy, all the more absolutely divine. The more that we participate in His Spirit, the more that we live in Him and He in us, the more shall we be like what He was in the world, the more shall we influence the world for good, and, at the same time, the more shall we be separate from it, the less shall we be conformed to it.

Nonconformity to the world, I must add, implies two other things which must be mentioned, yet which are so obvious that they may be merely mentioned.

The first is that no one can fail to be conformed to the world who takes as his standard of judgment and rule of action the opinion and approval of the world, not the truth and will of God. And there are many such persons. There are many among us who feel themselves safe only when thinking as others think and doing as others do; only when not differing in sentiment or practice from their neighbours. They do not realise how worthless a thing mere opinion is; that it has no value at all unless it correspond to fact; that what God demands of us is to believe what is really true, and to do what is really right, not to believe or do merely what other people believe to be true or right to be done. God would have us to rest only on fact, not opinion; on reality, not appearance; on what He has Himself done or enacted, not on what we or others fancy or wish. He requires of us a truthfulness which will be content with no substitute for His truth. And if we would not be conformed to the world we must carry into our religious life, into our whole life, this spirit of absolute truthfulness. We must be of those for whom the great question in life is not what do men say, or think, or do; not what is the opinion, will, or practice of the world, but what is true and right in itself; what is the judgment and will of God.

Next, the man who would not be conformed to the world must not only refuse to accept a worldly standard of life, but set before himself other than worldly ends of life. He cannot, without conformity to the world, make worldly gain, or honour, or pleasure his chief aim, or waste his strength and substance

on what is frivolous, sensuous, sinful. He cannot, without conformity to the world, live exclusively or mainly to self in any form, for living to self is selfishness, and selfishness is the very root of all worldliness. Out of it there springs only a poor, mean, earthly life, in which no human soul can develop itself, but necessarily consumes and destroys itself. To be not conformed to the world man must live to Christ, must live in an atmosphere of love, must live as becomes a spiritual and immortal being, a child of God, and heir of immortality. He must realise his true relationship to God and man, and his obligations to seek to glorify God and do good to men. This high aim he must strive to carry out consistently and uniformly in every department of life, in every action, and in every word. Only so can he avoid all conformity to the world.

It will now, I hope, be obvious to you from what has been said that the injunction of St Paul to be not conformed to the world is in its own nature a very broad and comprehensive one. It is so also as regards its sphere of application. The whole of our life, the whole range of our consciousness, activity, and influence, should be ruled by it.

“Be not conformed to this world.” Be not conformed to it in your hearts. The “world” is there, and you have to overcome it there by conforming to the law of God there, so that not the world but God’s kingdom may reign within you. The kingdom of God is not to be thought of as merely a far-away world or a churchly organisation. On the contrary, it is essentially humility and meekness of spirit, hatred of sin, love of righteousness, a merciful disposition, a pure, honest, and earnest heart. To be conformed to it, and not conformed to the world, you must have these and not their opposites. Your thoughts must be just, your feelings pure, all your inclinations good, all your aims generous and noble. It is precisely here, in fact, that the main stress, the decisive shock and struggle of the battle which you have to wage in life must lie. Conquer inwardly and you will conquer outwardly. Be conquered within and you will be conquered without. The heart itself is the key of the whole position. Defeated there, no side victories will save you from crushing disaster. Out of the heart are the issues of life and of death.

“Be not conformed to this world.” Be not conformed to it within the circle of the family. That may seem to be a small circle. But it is just within the narrowest spheres that the best and most important work is often done. Were a Christian spirit, a truly good spirit, prevalent in the families of our land, our whole social life would soon be Christian and good. But, alas, a worldly, immoral, irreligious spirit is far more common. The fountains are polluted. How can the streams be pure? Fathers and mothers exert a far greater influence for good or evil on society than politicians and legislators. A celebrated author has declared that “the first seven years of life are the most decisive, because then a mother’s discipline lays so firm a foundation that the rest of life is seldom able to affect it.” Not improbably he was right. A mother who is herself a Christian may by her example and discipline do, without going beyond her own household, more for Christ’s cause than a minister of the Gospel can effect by the preaching of a lifetime. But alas, how many mothers take no thought of using their power aright, and so abuse it through conformity to the evil passions and evil ways of this world, as to ruin the souls of their children and grievously to wrong and injure society!

“Be not conformed to this world.” Be not conformed to it within the Church. The Church should be altogether unworldly. It may be in reality the most worldly part of this world. The house dedicated to God is not unfrequently one in which those who are wont to assemble in it grievously fail to realise as they ought how those who are united with Christ are united with one another. There was a time, not so very far distant, when the non-official members of our congregations were hardly expected to feel much interest or take much part in their work or welfare. There has certainly been considerable improvement in this respect during the last half century. But there is room for vast improvement still. What the Church above all needs, what our congregations most require, is an abundant baptism of the Spirit which made the multitude of those who first received the Gospel “of one heart and of one soul.” Nowhere is the cold and deadening spirit of the world so out of place as in connection with the life and work of the Church, where all is vain if the warm, sincere, and invigorating

love, which is the most distinctive and precious gift of the Holy Ghost, be lacking.

Time does not permit me to insist on the importance of our not being conformed to the world in our ordinary business or professional life ; or to indicate how as citizens of a nation and members of general society we ought to exert what influence we can to promote conformity to the laws of truth and righteousness, and subserviency to the holy and beneficent ends which God prescribes for nations and society.

“ Be not conformed to this world.” It is easy advice, it may perhaps be said, to give but very difficult advice to take. Yes, my friends, and it may even be said advice utterly impossible for any one to take of himself. The Apostle tells us as much very plainly in the words immediately following those which we have considered. There is no freedom from conformity to the world to be hoped for by us unless through our being transformed by the renewal of our minds. We must have a new nature if we are to live in a new world. The nature we are born with—the corrupt nature of flesh and blood and of the will of man—is capable only of a worldly life. What is of the earth must be earthy. The flesh knows not the things of the spirit, for they are spiritually discerned.

But to whom does God ever deny a new nature? To whom does He ever refuse His Holy Spirit? To none who earnestly ask for them. Of all His gifts He is most willing to give us the greatest of all, His Holy Spirit. Yes, more willing than to allow His sun to shine upon us or to send us daily bread. The Holy Spirit is a gift which He beseeches all men to ask and receive. If we would resist the world, therefore, successfully; if we would conquer it instead of conforming to it; let us beseech God earnestly and continuously to renew our minds; to give us holy hearts through His Holy Spirit; to do this now, and to be ever doing it, until no element of the old nature, no principle of “ this world ” is to be found in us.

May God bless what has now been said. And to His name be glory for ever. Amen.

### XIII.

#### REST IN CHRIST.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—MATTHEW xi. 28.

CHRIST here declares Himself to be God and Saviour by the promise of what Almighty God and a Perfect Saviour can alone give. His promise, however, is neither universal nor absolute. It is only made to a specified class of men—the labouring and heavy laden; and to that class only on a specified condition—the coming to Himself. It therefore cannot be understood by us unless we consider it with reference to the persons to whom it is made, and with reference to the condition on which it is made. When so considered it will be found to contain the very marrow, the substance, of the Gospel. God grant that with grateful and glad hearts we may meditate on, and comply with, the blessed invitation here given us.

This, then, has first to be noticed, that Christ makes His invitation and promises His reward only to the labouring and heavy laden. He asks nothing from, and promises nothing to, those who feel as if they had no burdens to bear, or as if they had strength enough in themselves to support all that had been or could be laid upon them. Now there are two feelings essentially characteristic of those who labour and are heavy laden. There is a feeling of pressure on the soul, and there is a feeling of feebleness within it. Indifference or insensibility in its various forms is in direct antagonism to the former of these feelings; pride or self-dependence in its various forms is in direct antagonism to the latter.

There is a feeling of pressure on the soul. Life is realised to involve weighty responsibilities. It is realised to involve tasks difficult and harassing. All who are spiritually quite careless and thoughtless, all who rejoice exclusively in youth or strength, in

attractions of body or acquirements of mind, in popular applause or worldly wealth, labour not and bear no load because life lies as yet with no weight upon them,—because they fancy it far lighter and far less serious than it is,—because they have never looked upon it clearly and comprehensively,—have never learned the heaviness of its tasks and the hollowness of its promises,—how real its evils are and how false its joys are. They have seen it only when surrounded with the halo of a transient beauty, with a cloudy and delusive glory. Their experience of it has been wanting alike in depth and breadth, has been both superficial and one-sided; its real nature they have not reached, and its darker aspects, its serious trials, have not come round to them. Hence they have no labour, no heaviness of soul, and hence, also, Christ cannot speak to them, nor can His ministers, in His name, in words of direct invitation, for they have not yet reached the stage of thought and feeling where such words would be intelligible to them. Burdens must be felt before the offer to bear them can be accepted and valued. All that we can do for such persons is to assure them in words of solemn and affectionate warning that this lightness of feeling which they possess, this careless buoyancy of heart and spirit, is a delusion, and that when they have come to take a deeper and more comprehensive view they will find out their mistake. It is a serious and a testing question, then, for us all, Have we in God's good providence been brought even thus far? Have we been brought to a knowledge of the seriousness and responsibility of life? Have we any real sense of its painful pressure upon us? For while we may have reached this point and yet not be true Christians, if we have not reached it we are assuredly not Christians, and our whole view of the world and of our position in it must be changed, and even reversed, before we can understand what Christianity is, and what it aims at,—before we can make a meaning out of the injunctions of the Gospel, or lay hold of its promises.

The feeling of pressure on the soul, the sense of a heavy burden to be borne, may come from various causes. It may come from affliction. God may dispel a man's illusive fancies about life by sending loss of health and fortune, by sending pain and sorrow. Many have thus been led, and are daily



being led, to alter their views about it. They find by experience that it can press with a weight they never dreamed of in other days, never for a moment supposed possible. They find that, let them nerve themselves up to bear its burdens as they may, it needs the utmost tension of every faculty to do so; ay, and that after all they stagger and grow faint—strength ebbing away, hope dying out, darkness creeping over the eyes, and despair settling down on the heart.

Or it may come from disappointed desires. So it does in many. They set their hearts on some worldly object or other. They immensely over-estimate the worth of that object, and immensely under-estimate the exertions that must be made to obtain it. It seems within easy reach, but baffles and mocks their attempts to grasp it, until at length, when their strength is exhausted, they behold it disappear and escape them for ever; or if they succeed in obtaining it, find that what they took for precious gold is merest rubbish—that what they have pursued as the highest good wholly fails to satisfy them—and that, if their life is not to be one long ruinous error, they must now, when their vigour is gone and their days are near a close, begin the great work of it over again. Thus wearied with their useless efforts, and in bitterness of heart because of disappointed desires, they can understand right well the expostulations of the Prophet, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and labour for that which satisfieth not?”

Guilt, again, is another cause of painful pressure, and, indeed, the heaviest and sorest of all. Multitudes, it is true, have consciences so dull and dead that they never realise that God has claims upon them which they are not meeting, and that consequently their guilt is fearfully accumulating against them. These, of course, owing to their strange and stupid insensibility, are conscious of no burden. But whenever a man has been aroused out of this lethargy and so quickened in conscience as to ask himself seriously, How does this mass of constantly increasing guilt affect me in God’s sight and as an immortal being? Is it not all standing against me as a debt for which I am responsible to the uttermost farthing? Do not reason and conscience and Scripture declare that what

has been sown in the form of sin must be reaped in the form of punishment?—I say when a man has once been brought seriously to put to himself these surely most reasonable questions, and has found, as find he must, that he has been incessantly and zealously treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, it is no marvel if he feel crushed down by a dreadful load which he can neither bear nor cast off.

Sin as a present power within us is another cause, and what its weight and might are no man knows until he begins to hate and fight against it. Then it seems to cling the closer and to weigh the heavier, as if its strength were increased by every effort put forth to weaken it. Sin is as certainly stronger than we are, as it is feebler than God is. A single bad habit, when it has once got firmly rooted in the nature, is more than most men can contend successfully against. It requires, for instance, a fortitude of character which, alas! is very rare, for a confirmed drunkard to free himself from the degrading thralldom of his ruinous passion? What shall we say, then, when the task is not to get rid of one bad habit but of all—not to overcome some single vice but to obtain the victory over a vile heart? What but that the leopard may as easily change its spots, or the camel pass through the eye of a needle, as a man do this? What but that the strongest who self-reliantly grapples with sin, resolved in his own strength to conquer and crush it, will soon find himself grovelling as a helpless victim beneath the foot of his antagonist? Sin as a present power—this too, then, is indeed a burden and a heavy load.

I have thus described the nature and pointed out the causes of a sense of pressure on the soul. But a state of painful labour supposes a sense of feebleness within as well as a sense of pressure from without. The heaviest load is no burden where there is strength adequate to its easy support. Hence in every labouring and heavy-laden man the consciousness of outward pressure must be accompanied by a corresponding consciousness of inward feebleness. He is one who not only knows the evils of life as they are, but one who knows himself as he is; one who has obtained self-knowledge in the only way it can be obtained—that is, by laying self-conceit aside; one who, having searched and tried himself honestly,

has been brought to feel that if left to himself in any instance he will fail, whether what is required of him be endurance or performance. It is only to those who have come to this humbling conclusion that Christ addresses His invitation. He will only deal with us as what we are, not as what we in our false pride and foolish self-reliance fancy ourselves to be. He will not begin His work in us by delusion and flattery, but demands that we renounce, at the very outset, our own wisdom and strength, our own will and self-love, as folly and weakness, and resign ourselves wholly to Himself; that we place no trust in our own unaided powers either to accomplish duty or sustain trial, but recognise that apart from His help, His grace, we must remain fettered by the bonds and crushed by the weight of misery and sin.

We have seen, then, who the "labouring and heavy laden" are. To them Christ says, "Come unto Me." This is what they need; what will give them the relief, the rest, which they feel themselves so much to require. "Come unto Me,"—What does that mean? Of course, it does not mean any mere bodily approach. That is not possible, nor would it avail if it were. It is not with our limbs and feet, but with our minds and hearts—with our reasons, our affections, our wills—that we have to draw near to Christ. To "Come to Christ," in fact, is neither more nor less than to become a true Christian. What, then, does that imply?

Well, it implies, for one thing, some knowledge of who Christ was, and of what He taught, and suffered, and aimed at, and accomplished—some knowledge of the facts, the truths, which constitute the Gospel. I venture not to try to define how much knowledge there must be. That is a foolish task many have laboured at, distributing all the truths of the Gospel under the two heads of essential and non-essential. I think very little of these labours and of the distinction upon which they proceed. But while we may doubt or even deny that there is any fixed amount of knowledge, any invariable number of truths, essential to all, without respect of persons or circumstances, there can be no reasonable doubt that some knowledge—it may be very different for different

men—is essential to Christian belief. Wherever we are bound to believe, we are bound to have as much knowledge as will make our belief intelligent, reasonable. Belief we know not of what nor why is not a religious but an immoral state of mind. There is no coming to Christ possible, then, except through knowledge of what God's Word tells about Him. It is true that this knowledge, this mere head-knowledge, is no more than a condition implied in coming unto Him, but it is nevertheless an essential condition; and it is, I fear, one not always fulfilled even in this land of Bibles, and churches, and schools. There are many grown-up persons of reputable character who have been in the habit of attending church all their days so strangely ignorant of the contents of the Gospel records that it is little wonder if they do not go to Christ, and that it would be a great wonder indeed if having gone to Him they could contentedly remain so ignorant of Him as they are. We cannot be in the way of going to Christ if knowledge about Him be indifferent to us.

Besides knowledge, however, the coming to Christ involves the recognition of His supreme importance to us. It is necessary that all who come unto Him realise their need of Him; realise that apart from Him they are undone; that neither in themselves nor elsewhere, save only in a crucified Redeemer, is there the light, and help, and safety which they need. It is necessary that they recognise that He alone has fully disclosed what must be the true character of God as a Father, perfectly holy yet infinitely loving; what ought to be the true character of men, as sons of God, spiritual and immortal beings; what is the true relationship of God to man and of man to God; and how man should feel and act towards his brother-men; in a word, that He alone has clearly made known the truth on momentous matters compared with which the grandest results of science are as the dust of the highways contrasted with whatever is of most value among men. It is necessary that they recognise that if what Christ is said to have suffered and done be not true, there is no certain evidence that there may be forgiveness for the past, and happiness for the eternal future; that, apart from Him, sin neither can be got rid of nor holiness be established; that the

motives which Christ's life and death excite, and the power which the Holy Spirit, one of His gifts, confers, are the only sources whence spiritual life can either be derived or sustained in corrupt human nature.

It is not enough, however, merely to recognise all this; we must further accept and act on it; we must acquiesce in heart and life to the revelation He has made of Himself, allowing the facts and truths of it absolutely to prompt and guide us. Since there is no full light in matters spiritual but His, we must accept it and suffer Him to be made wisdom unto us; since God's mercy is only manifested to us through Him, we must not look for mercy from any other source; since strength to resist sin and perform duty is only to be found in Him, we must seek to be always animated by His love and sustained by His spirit. We must not stop short of this submission of will and affection, and obedience of life to Him, for we cannot come unto Him by mere knowledge or mere belief, but must sincerely accept of Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, not separating what God has joined together, not supposing that we can be in Him unless He be also in us. Salvation has two aspects, but is not two things. Christ is the whole of salvation. We in Him, this is our justification; He in us, this is our sanctification; we in Him and He in us, this is perfect redemption; and he who comes to Christ at all must receive Him as a perfect redemption—as not only eternal life for him, but a present life in Him.

Thus Christ is come to.

We have now to consider what Christ promises to those who come unto Him. He says He will give them "rest." What are we to understand by that? Text and context both make clear what it is. It is rest from labour and heaviness—rest not from work, but from what makes work painful and toilsome. Rest from work is inactivity, which God never made man for, and which, instead of conferring happiness on him, would make his life intolerable. The rest which Christ offers us is to be found not in the absolute abandonment of work, but in the doing of His work. "Take My yoke upon you, and

learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls." Come to Me and follow Me; imitate My example, bear whatever God lays on you in the same spirit as I do, not proudly, not impatiently, but humbly and lovingly: do this, and you will get rest. Look to Me; learn of Me. I have many burdens to bear, none ever had burdens so many or so heavy, yet, amidst them all, beneath them all, I have rest—true, sure, eternal; carry your burdens in the same way, and you will enjoy the same rest. That was what Christ said; rest not *from* work, but *in* work, was what He promised. It is a rest like that which God, Christ, and the angels have, who are ever working, and yet ever resting. It is not the merely negative rest of inaction, but the positive rest which flows from the free and orderly exercise of the faculties and the satisfaction of the desires. It is exemption, indeed, from the pain of work, from labour and heaviness, from what makes work a burden, from more work than our strength will stand, or work of such a nature that our will and feelings revolt against it; but it is enjoyment as well, and enjoyment of the deepest and purest kind. He who has it is not so much secured against burdens and sorrows as put in possession of a strength by which burdens are made light, of a secret by which sorrow is made to yield joy, as to the hero of old out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. This rest can be had in Christ by coming to Him, as has been described, and abiding in Him, but from no other source and in no other way can it be had. Christ gives with loving heart and bounteous hand to every labouring and heavy-laden soul that comes to Him "rest"—the beginnings of it in this life, the fulness of it in the future life. Let me show briefly that He does so.

The sense of weariness and heaviness of soul was referred to four causes—to affliction, to disappointed desires, to guilt, to sin. What, then, does Christ do for His people in regard to each of these? Afflictions, we are all aware, He does not exempt them from so long as they are in this present world. While here rest from affliction, in the sense of absence of affliction, it is contrary to His plan, contrary both to His goodness and His wisdom, to grant them. He will fulfil His

promise in that sense also when they shall have entered into the perfect rest of heaven. There He shall "wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." But until the former things have passed away, and especially until sin has passed away, sorrow must be, affliction is needed and good. Believers have, accordingly, their share of all the ordinary ills that flesh is heir to, and they have sorrows even peculiar to themselves. The Gospel, when it enters into a heart, brings with it sorrows as well as joys not previously experienced. It deadens none of the sensibilities to suffering—it quickens those that are moral. True, it is not the cause but the occasion of these new griefs; sin in ourselves or others, sin seen as it never was before, is the true cause; yet if there had been no spiritual life there would have been, of course, no spiritual pain, and spiritual pain is not pleasant but painful, yea, of all pain the most painful. The Gospel is not the source of moral grief, but it unlocks it, opens it up, and lets its waters flow forth. But notwithstanding all this, Christ gives, even in regard to affliction, to those who come to Him, much rest in this present world. His own life of suffering, and His teaching about suffering, and the strength of the Holy Spirit which He has obtained to enable suffering to be rightly borne, have altogether changed the character of suffering for those who love Him. He has been careful not to destroy it, but He has converted the evil of it into good. He has rendered it precious, so that its preservation to believers is one of the mercies of God. He has, by His example, doctrine, and spirit, enabled them to glory in affliction, and to count it, even when most severe, "all joy"—pure joy, nothing but joy. He has, in a word, given them in affliction a rest, a positive satisfaction, which physical pain or mental sorrow cannot reach either to disturb or to destroy, and which may be great in proportion to the very intensity of the pain and sorrow.

Again, Christ gives those who come to Him rest from all those desires which, being doomed inevitably to disappointment, exhaust the strength and ruin the happiness of the soul. There is no adequate satisfaction for the heart in any created

object. It has been made to find its rest in the Creator, and must be restless until it rest in Him, which it can only do through Christ, the union between the Father and the Son being so intimate that no man can come unto the Father except through the Son. When our desires, however, are all centred in Christ, and other things are cared for and followed after only in accordance with His will, and in the measure that the supreme affection due to Him allows, then the soul enjoys rest; not the rest which results from the absence of desire (for that is the rest of death), but the rest which results from the full and legitimate satisfaction of desire, which is the rest of life in its utmost vigour. Before the Fall man was happy, because he desired only what he needed, and obtained all that he desired. Since the Fall man has been unhappy, because what he needed he has not desired, and what he did not need he has desired. Sin has broken up the proper connection between our desires and our wants. Christ restores it: He leads us through the effectual working of His Spirit to seek everything in Himself, everything in conformity to His righteous will, and then bestows on us everything we seek: He makes every desire the expression of a real want, and then gratifies every desire. He thus delivers us from the restlessness which perverse desires must ever produce, and gives us the rest which the satisfaction of legitimate desires must ever produce.

Again, Christ removes from conscience the awful load of guilt. You remember how in "Pilgrim's Progress" it is only when Christian comes up to the cross that his burden loosens from off his shoulders, and falls from off his back, and disappears in the sepulchre standing open a little below. Ah! John Bunyan, "the Jerusalem sinner saved," knew well the truth of that part of his wondrous dream. The sacrifice of Christ can alone give us assurance of the Divine forgiveness. We may doubt every other evidence of God's readiness to show mercy and grace to sinners, but there is no arguing against it possible in presence of the fact that He has given His own Son even unto death for us. Dull, indeed, must be the mind, and hard the heart, that can resist that. Oh my friends, let us not dare to think God cannot love us, great although our guilt may be; for look to Calvary, and behold there how He does



love us—behold there, in those death-agonies of Jesus which were the climax and completion of a life of self-denial and suffering, a proof of God's forgiving love towards us, before which doubt is at once irrational and profane. Christ's death, apprehended by faith, severs the ties that bind our guilt upon us as a burden which exhausts the strength, extinguishes hope, and destroys happiness; and our souls are able to rise up in joyous consciousness that the light of God's reconciled countenance shines upon them with the might of a new life. They find rest—rest from the burden of unforgiven guilt.

Finally, Christ gives all who come to Him rest from the power of sin. He gradually overcomes and destroys it in them, replacing it with true holiness. The more they live in the contemplation of His character and in dependence on His Spirit, the more deeply they enjoy this rest from sin, this sweet rest of holiness. They experience more and more the sufficiency of Divine grace to regulate their nature and conduct, and as evil grows feebler within them, and their affections come to cling more exclusively and closely to God, the peace and joy of the spiritual life widen and deepen into the great sea of heavenly blessedness, where all is calm because all is holy, where rest is unbroken, where rolls no wave of sin or any trouble.

Will you come? Will you hearken to the invitation of Him whom God hath sent to save you—whose own most earnest desire is to save you? God grant that you do. Life and death—the rest of heaven and the unrest of hell—are set before you. Make your choice, as men and women on whom God has conferred the gift of reason, and having made your choice, act on it to the end, as well aware how great will be the recompense of reward. Meekly suffer and nobly strive as Jesus has shown you how to do, and

“Soon shalt thou fight and bleed no more,  
Soon, soon thy weary course be o'er,  
And deep the rest thou then shalt take.”

## XIV.

### SUPREME LOVE DUE TO CHRIST.

“He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son and daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”—  
MATTHEW x. 37.

THE meaning of these words is obvious. Christ tells us by them that He claims our affections in a supreme degree; that we are not to love any creature, even among those whom it is most natural for us to love, as we love Him; that if our love to Him be not stronger and deeper than our love to whatever else is dear to us on earth, it is a love unworthy of its object. If Christ could approve of our loving any creature more than Himself it would be the loving our parents and children more.

He had felt as child and youth and man what a blessed and precious thing it was to have a mother's love; and He had a true son's love to His mother; and one of the last things which He did as He hung upon the cross was to entrust His mother to the care of one who He knew would watch over her in her declining years with all sympathy and affection. He who took the little children up into His arms and blessed them, who raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain and the daughter of Jairus, did not undervalue the feelings of a parent's heart. He demands, however, distinctly—here in my text—to be loved with a higher love than is to be given to any other person or thing whatever. “Father and mother,” “son and daughter,” are mentioned for the very purpose of showing that He cannot tolerate the usurpation by any creature of that place in our affections which is rightfully due to Himself. Parents and children,—there is nothing nearer to human beings, nothing made by nature dearer to them, than these, and yet Christ cannot accept our love as a true and proper love if we do not love Him more than we do even them. Of course, if these, the

natural objects of our tenderest human affections, may not be rightfully put into competition with Him, far less may such things as silver and gold, selfish pleasures, or worldly vanities and distinctions.

This truth—this condition of the Christian life—St Luke represents our Lord as having expressed in a still stronger form. “There went,” he says, “great multitudes unto Jesus, and He turned and said unto them, If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” These words may well arrest attention. No one can for a moment suppose that Christ requires His followers actually to hate either their relatives or their own lives. But He must manifestly have had a purpose in speaking as if He did. To say that He adopted a Hebrew form of expression which just meant to love less may be perfectly true. The Hebrews themselves, however, must have had a reason for speaking in that way, when they did so speak; and Jesus must have adopted that form of speaking because He wished to convey the shade of meaning which alone could justify it.

What that was it is not difficult to perceive. He evidently wished to teach that He must have from His followers a devotion and affection which no creature might share; that He must rule in their hearts with an undivided, undisputed love; that even parental love, and filial love, and conjugal love, and the love of life, if compared with love to Him, may be called hatred. This is the truth which He laid down on the occasion and in the words referred to by St Luke, and substantially also in the text. Let us endeavour to realise what it implies.

In the first place, then, the demand of Christ clearly means that He believed Himself entitled to ask from men a love and homage such as God, and God alone, had hitherto claimed from them. I do not see how we can reasonably doubt that Christ actually used the words which St Matthew and St Luke report Him to have used. I cannot conceive how such words could ever have come to be attributed to Him if He had not really employed them. No prophet had ever put forth such a claim. No other founder or reformer of religion has ever done so. The claim is without a parallel. And yet [He who made it

inculcated humility and reverence towards God more earnestly and more effectively than any one else has ever done. He showed a love for the Eternal Father, a continuous sense of His presence and favour, an earnestness of desire to do His will, and a zeal for His glory which are also without a parallel. Yet He obviously thought it nothing derogatory to the Father's honour, no robbery of what was due to Him, to claim from man an equal love, to make Himself in that respect at least equal with God. How could He have done so if He had been a mere man? How could He if He had not been conscious of a unique relationship to, an essential oneness with, the Father, of such an identity with the Father, that what was given to Him was given to the Father also?

This text, then, is one of very many in the Gospels which directly suggest the question, What think ye of Christ? and which at the same time indicates that the only right answer to the question is that which St Peter gave, "Thou art the Son of the living God."

I remark, in the next place, that Christ in making this demand upon us *was revealing God to us*. He was giving expression to God's feelings towards us. He was presenting the Divine character to us in one of its most impressive aspects. Was not the first and great commandment given by God to the Israelites that they should love Him with all their heart and strength and soul and might? Did He not expressly declare Himself through Moses to be a "jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments"? Do not all the prophets represent God as jealous lest men do not love Him enough? Do they not represent Him as actually beseeching men to love Him, as indignantly expostulating with them for not loving Him or loving Him so little, as threatening them and punishing them for their lack of love to Him?

The fact that they do this to the extent which every reader of them is aware of is the ground of the commonest objection made to the view which is given us of God in the Old Testament. It is said that it is an unworthy view of Him; that

those ancient Jews conceived of God as far too like themselves,—angry, jealous, fierce; that Christ gave a very different representation of God, one quite inconsistent with the threatenings and terrors and judgments of which the Hebrew Scriptures tell us so much.

I answer that the anger, jealousy, fierceness, the threatenings, terrors, and judgments of the God of the Old Testament were simply the expressions and consequences of His Infinite Love seeking the supreme love of man, and incapable of being satisfied with less; and that Christ when He said, “He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son and daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me,” “If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple,” was simply revealing to us perfectly that in God’s character which explains and harmonises all that is objected to in Moses and the prophets. Let men talk as they will, if we only listen to Christ’s own demands upon us, we must acknowledge that He is “the express image” of the “jealous God” of the Old Testament; that the central all-comprehensive claim of the one is that of the other; that in both there is the same desire for the love of the human heart, the same jealousy of that love not being given, the same intolerance, if I may so speak, where that love is not given.

The question at once arises, What are we to think of this representation of God’s character? Are we to receive or reject it? Are we to be ashamed of it or to glory in it? The answer is not difficult, not doubtful. That the God revealed to us by Moses and the prophets, and last of all, and far most perfectly of all, by Jesus Christ, is jealous lest we love parent or child, pleasure or fortune, good name or life, as much or more than we love Him, is indeed a solemn and even a terrible truth, but surely it is still more a blessed and a gladsome truth. There is no doubt, I admit, that it was the reason, the explanation, of a multitude of words and acts recorded in the Bible of the most unpleasant kind; there is no doubt either that it has been equally the reason, the explanation, of a large proportion of the painful events which have happened in history, and of what has been most bitter and grievous in the individual ex-

perience of all of us; but take it away, and what would the Bible, or history, or individual life be? Why, without it there would have been no Bible, for a God not jealous for our love would never have revealed Himself to us in redemption; without it, humanity would have had no Heavenly Father, and all our lives would have been comparatively loveless.

There are some, who fancy themselves to be wise, who ask us to substitute for the God revealed in the written word and in the Incarnate Word a God whom they represent as the Pure or Absolute Idea, or as an Unconscious Will, or as the Unknowable, or as a Stream of Tendency, or as Collective Humanity; but clearly so long as we give either our reasons or our affections fair play, we cannot hesitate between such thoughtless and heartless representations of God as these and the manifestation of Him in Christ as the God whose love can only be satisfied with a higher love than any we can give to father or mother, son or daughter. We cannot hesitate between such mere idols of the brain, and the true, the living, and the loving God.

The thought of God as not only an Infinite Living Person, but as one who greatly loves us, is surely a most blessed and comforting thought, yea, the most blessed and comforting of all thoughts. It can contribute to no human being's happiness to believe that God is indifferent to his happiness, cares absolutely nothing for him, has no love for him; while he who has faith in the love of God towards him may with strong heart dare and endure all things, and rejoice through all tribulations.

Here, however, some one may perhaps think, Yes, I should certainly wish God to love me, but I should wish also that His love had no jealousy in it; that He did not heed whether I gave Him my heart or not; that my love to Him had no effect on His love to me; that He blessed me all the same whether I loved Him or did not, whether I loved Him much or little.

This wish, I imagine, many cherish, although, of course, only in a vague, unconscious, or half-conscious way. But it is an obviously unreasonable wish; it is a wish even for what is absolutely impossible. To love and to be indifferent whether the love be returned or not are contrary states of mind. They cannot go together; the one necessarily excludes the other.

Love, of its very nature, as certainly seeks love in return as fire tends to burn.

If God had no desire that we should love Him—were He in no way offended at our not loving Him—there could be no real love in Him to us. If His love to us be at once sincere love and infinite love, He must be unsatisfied with less than our highest and strongest love. From this point of view we clearly see how God's sternest reproofs, most indignant expostulations, and severest threats in Scripture, as well as His most painful dispensations in Providence, may be regarded as so many evidences of His love. The stronger love is, the less easily can it content itself to do without love. If two strangers quarrel they simply separate. If two acquaintances give great offence to each other they pass one another without the customary recognition. But it is a very different matter with, say, a mother whose affections for her son or daughter have been thwarted and wounded. The mother's heart within her clings to the offending and unloving child. Her heart must have love in return, and it is impossible for her calmly to resign herself to live without it. Her reproaches spring from the very depth and strength of her affection, and they are passionate because it is sincere and intense.

So the very vehemence of the Divine expostulations and reproaches in Scripture, and the variety of trials and afflictions which Providence assigns us, are signs of the greatness of God's longing for our love. If He were indifferent to us, if He loved us less, He would not have spoken so nor would He act so. Along with every wrathful word which He addresses to us, we may hear His voice also whispering, "Son, daughter, give Me thy heart." In every affliction which He sends us, we may feel His hand seeking to grasp ours in reconciliation, in mutual love. This representation of God as loving us and longing for our love is the glory of our religion. Other religions set before men gods who offer little or no affection and are content to receive little or none; who demand a lip homage and outward service but do not ask for the heart; while the God made known to us through Christ cares for nothing we can offer Him if the heart itself be withheld.

There is a thought closely related to what we have just been saying. When God, when Christ, demands from us a supreme love, a love incomparable with any other love, what is demanded is not a something which might either have been demanded or not, but what could not in reason or righteousness fail to be demanded. You will remark that by St Matthew Christ is reported to have said that a man who does not love Him more than father and mother, son and daughter, is "*not worthy of Him*"; and by St Luke, that whoever comes to Him and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and life itself, "*cannot be His disciple.*" That "*not worthy*" and "*cannot be*" tell us the same thing, viz. that this claim on our love which Christ as the express image of the person of God makes upon us is no arbitrary claim, but one which has its reason in the very nature of our relation to Him. If we do not thus love God we are simply not His children, and nothing which God could do for us would make us, so long as we are in that state, His children. To have such love is to be His children. If we do not thus love Christ we have not that kind of character which constitutes worthiness of Him, which makes a man Christ's disciple.

The jealousy of God is an aspect of His righteousness as well as of His love. We are apt to associate injustice with jealousy; to conceive of it as a suspiciousness, which is unwarranted, that we are not loved enough, or that love to which we have a right is given to others. A great deal of human jealousy is of this kind, but not all of it. The jealousy of a mother that a son or daughter should act less wisely or worthily than he or she ought to do is often a most reasonable, righteous, and sacred feeling. St Paul was nobly jealous with what the Bible calls a "*godly jealousy.*"

God can only entertain a godly jealousy; and when He is jealous lest we do not love Him above all things else, it is because not to love the Creator above the creature, not to love supreme excellence supremely, not to love perfectly, or with the whole heart, perfect Truth, perfect Beauty, perfect Goodness, not to love most Him who has loved us most and done and suffered most for us, is, in its own nature, utterly perverse. It never can be right to love least what is most lovable or



to love most what is least lovable. It never can be right to prefer the lower to the higher, the worse to the better. We can do that, and alas! we often do it. But God cannot do it; Christ cannot do it; and they can never approve of our doing it. There is no selfishness, no meanness, in their asking from us our best and deepest affection, our utmost love; God as absolutely good, Christ as the embodiment of infinite love, could not seek from us less, or be content to receive less, than the supreme devotion of our souls. The essential righteousness of the Divine Nature is the ground of the demand on us to love most the Highest, the only Infinite and Perfect, Object of love; to love everything else only in subordination to it; to love nothing in competition with it.

Now, what is right towards God never involves wrong towards man. Therefore, I remark next, that the supreme love due to our God and Saviour, while it requires us to sacrifice all love which is incompatible with love to Him—all love which would put itself in competition with love to Him—far from weakening or injuring in any way any true love kept in its true place, strengthens and fosters it.

If you make any earthly object, however true and good in itself, the highest object of your love, it will cease to be true and good to you, and because made an idol of it will be morally and spiritually ruinous to you. And, after all, your irrational and idolatrous love of it will probably not be so strong and will certainly not be so pure as your rational and Christian love of it might have been. He who loves Christ more than father, mother, son, or daughter, yet loves father, mother, son, and daughter more than he who does not love Christ most. Supreme affection to Christ never diminishes and lowers, it invariably intensifies and exalts, all other legitimate affections. If you love what is true and good in subordination to the love of Christ, His love will not only bless and sanctify your love but will make it deeper, stronger, more binding, more lasting. It is just the man whose natural affections have been expanded and developed through a continually growing love of God who may be expected to love his wife better in his old age than in his hour of prime, and his grandchildren as deeply as his first new-born babe.

It is not on the ruins of our other affections that love to God must be raised but on their summits. The more we dwell in love with those whom He would have us to love, the more we shall be able to love Himself with a still deeper and truer love. While, on the other hand, the more love we bear to Him the more love we shall still have to expend on His creatures, and on every good cause. The most loving parent, the most zealous patriot, the most devoted philanthropist, will receive an increase of parental love, of patriotism, of philanthropy with every increase of love to God in Christ.

Christ demanded, I have said, from all His followers, and from all men, for all men ought to be His followers, the supreme love of their hearts, because He could, from the very nature of things, demand no less. But I need scarcely add that this demand was none the less as gracious as it was righteous.

Supreme love to Christ is not only what is due to Christ but is what alone can give happiness to men. Christ is perfect, infinite love. He desires, therefore, our perfect happiness, the highest happiness of which as finite beings we are capable; and this implies our loving Him above all other beings, and with our whole hearts. It is only on this condition that we can have the happiness which He wishes us to possess, and which He died on the cross to procure for us. It is only through the complete satisfaction of a love which fills the whole soul that we can be completely happy. The mysterious power we possess of doubling our life, of going out of ourselves to live in another, this mysterious power of love is that which can alone enable us to taste of the full happiness and glory of existence.

But where on this earth is such love as the human heart prays for and longs for? Where is there on earth any creature capable of satisfying our whole capacity of love and our whole desire of being loved, and so filling with happiness a heart which is in misery when alone and which is ever seeking, with a perseverance as indefatigable as unfruitful, an object to which it may surrender itself with all its affections?

There is no such creature. The excellence of the best of earthly beings is soon measured; the happiness it can give

soon exhausted. But if we can find on earth no creature so lovable and so loving as to fill our hearts, in the presence of our God and Saviour the difficulty is of a quite contrary character. We seek in vain within ourselves for a heart capable of containing the love with which He inspires us or the happiness with which He floods our souls. He has infinitely more to give than we have desire to ask or power to receive. The love which cleaves to Him satisfies for time and eternity. The poorest man is rich who has it. The richest man is poor who has it not.

Oh, let us earnestly seek, and pray, and strive to have it. We cannot take it by our own strength; we cannot obtain it by our own skill. We can do no such feat as love Christ supremely merely because we are told to do it. But He who makes on us the demand is willing to give us strength to obey it.

Let us think of the cross of our Saviour and the love it displays. Let us behold the opened arms of the Eternal Father. Let us accept the offered help of the Holy Spirit. Let us use the means of grace. Let us cherish what love we have and pray for more. Let us keep steadily before us what we have to aim at and press towards it in humble dependence on God. And let us doubt not that a time will come when our love will at length be worthy of our Lord, when work in His service will be no longer toil, when action will be no longer conscious of restraint, and existence will be a perpetual joy, an everlasting anthem.

May God bless what has now been said, and to His name be glory for ever. Amen.

## XV.

### A FAITHFUL SAYING.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”—1 TIM. i. 15.

Or, perhaps more exactly, “Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

AT the table of the Lord this day what Christ has done for us has been shown forth to us by sacramental symbols and actions; and we have shown forth, it is to be hoped with sincerity,—we have outwardly professed,—our faith in Him, and love and gratitude to Him, for what He has done. Let us not turn away our spirits now to any lower or meaner theme; let us still for a little make His work for us, and our indebtedness to Him, the object of our thoughts. The text is well fitted to help us to do so. May God bless it to this end unto all of us, suggesting to us useful reflections, and producing in us salutary impressions by means of it.

The saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is not merely the saying of the text. It is the saying of the whole New Testament. It is the saying which is the consummation of the whole revelation of God. It is the substance of what the whole Christian Church in all lands says. It is the saying which is the very foundation and essence of the Gospel. And just because all this—and no mere sentence or sentiment even of an Apostle—there is all the more meaning, force, and comfort in what St Paul here declares of it.

This saying which includes so much—this saying which is God’s great word of salvation—this saying which had been spoken through so many men, and in so many forms, and, above all, in Christ’s own life and death—this saying it is which is “a faithful saying”; a saying, in other words, in which we may place the utmost confidence; about which we need have no doubt; which is beyond all reasonable dispute;

which is as certain as it is wondrous ; which is the expression of real fact, and for which the evidence is ample, clear, and strong. That is what St Paul affirms, and his affirmation is, I think, one which concerns us all very closely.

There are, I am aware, not a few nowadays who regard the question of the truth of the Gospel as of comparatively small importance, and the duty of being convinced as to its truth one neither of urgent nor of universal obligation. It is enough, they think, simply to believe and practise it. Ordinary people, they say, have neither the time nor the ability to examine into the grounds of their religion, and all that can be fairly expected of them is merely that they receive and act on it. If they believe and obey the result will be all the same whether they have reason for their belief or not, or whether there is any reason to be had for their belief or not. Thus some represent faith as quite distinct from reason, exalt faith at the expense of reason, and disparage truth as less worth than mere feeling or mere opinion.

I can have no sympathy with this sort of thought and speech. All our interests in the Gospel, it seems to me, depend on its being true. Its ideals and tendencies might be the purest and noblest, but that would not avail if it were founded on a delusion. Our Lord never asked men to believe on Him farther than He had given them reason to believe. The Apostles, it is quite certain, wherever they went laboured first of all, and above all, to prove that Jesus was the Christ—to present such evidence that those who did not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour would be without excuse. The Gospel claims to be accepted as the Truth—God's own saving and sanctifying truth—and those only who believe in it as what they have ascertained to be the Truth have Christian faith. Mere faith—blind faith—is a sin against the soul, and a sin against God, who has made the soul to live in and by the truth. It is largely because men are content with such faith, but do not feel their need of finding a sure ground for it, that their faith is the feeble and inoperative thing it so often is. If they got it less easily, if they would not be content to believe as true what they did not see to be true, the truth when once obtained would be grasped by them more firmly, loved more dearly, and acted on

more fully. The truth gives light and life only when the soul intelligently apprehends it, and lovingly receives it. This is the blessed peculiarity of the Gospel, that it is pure truth, capable of standing the strictest scrutiny, so that the more you test it by your reason, the more you verify it by your conscience and affection, the more you prove it by application in practice, the more you examine its grounds, its evidences, its declarations, the more you honour it.

The saying that Christ came into the world to save sinners, Paul adds, is "worthy of all acceptation." It is so, of course, because it is "faithful"—of assured truth—of absolute certainty. Were it not thus faithful it would be wrong in us to accept it. But it has other grounds than its mere truth to our esteem. It is not only truth, but truth of vital moment, of unspeakable importance. It is the very marrow of the Gospel, summing up, in one precious sentence, its great characteristic and its great purpose, and whatever concerns the welfare and happiness of a Christian. It is a declaration of what was the central fact of human history and the crowning act of Divine revelation. It announces to us that which the patriarchs desired, which the prophets foretold, which the Apostles preached,—that which the types of the ancient economy prefigured, and which the sacraments of the new economy seal. It tells of pardon and mercy to those who are under the just condemnation of the law; of a cure for spiritual disease; of freedom from the slavery of sin; of strength and grace for the life that now is; of joy and glory for the life that is to be. Truly, then, it is "worthy of all acceptation," and it must be the extreme of folly not to receive it with readiness and heartiness. From such folly may God preserve us.

The saying, which is so faithful and which ought to be so acceptable—the saying, "Christ came into the world to save sinners"—first states, you will observe, a fact, and then tells us the design of that fact.

The fact is, "*Christ came into the world.*" That implies that Christ *was before* He came into the world. Perhaps, indeed, the expression in itself, apart from all similar phrases, torn from the substance and isolated from the analogy of Scripture, would not bind us down to attach this sense to it. But we

must interpret it as what it is, a general expression of the revelation of God which centres in Christ; we must look at it in the light of other statements plainly kindred to it. The Bible, it has been said, is like the tabernacle, where, in accordance with a regulation of the law, the lamps were to be lighted by one another. And manifestly, if acting on this principle, we would light this particular lamp of the glorious temple of Holy Scripture, we must allow to shine on it such passages as these: "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "I come forth from the Father and am come into the world."

Christ came into the world. He came from the bosom of the Father, where He had from eternity been, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. "The Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God." In giving us Him God gave us of His own very self—of His own very substance, His own very life, His own very character, His own very love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." And Christ, that Son, came; He came from God; He was God; He came "from the bosom of the Father" to "show us the Father." He came from out the Infinite fully to meet and satisfy the cry of the creature after God. He came "in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily" to draw us into a loving communion and transforming sympathy with God, through revealing God to us as just and holy, but also as tender and compassionate, gracious and forgiving. And this He did through taking on Him the nature of man, with all the faculties and affections of the body and soul of man, with all the natural although none of the sinful infirmities of man. For only through such union of the Divine and Human in Christ—only through God coming thus out of the Infinite and revealing Himself in the finite, by a perfect representative, an express image, subject to liability to pain, temptation, and death, like others of mortal mould, could God and man, separated through sin, be reconciled.

Hence Christ came as man; a Son revealing a Father; a human person imaging a Divine person; a human brother, bound by love, sympathy, and suffering to all His human

brethren, participating in their weaknesses, bearing their sicknesses and sorrows, grieving over their sins, going before them through the death-shade, and presenting that face in which shone the ineffable glory veiled for their sakes in mortal agony and stained with human tears. Verily, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh"—God incarnating Himself—God, from holy hatred of sin and ineffable love to sinners, despising not the womb of a woman, shrinking not from sharing in man's uttermost misery, yea, humbling Himself even to the shame and agony of that awful death on Calvary.

It is that great mystery and yet most certain fact to which the Apostle refers. How have we regarded it, how have we felt towards it and dealt with it in time past? Have the infinite righteousness and infinite love disclosed by it been responded to with such admiration and love as even our narrow creaturely hearts might well be expected to show? Or, have we not reason to mourn that it has not been so, and strong reason to pray that in the time to come we may see much more clearly, and feel much more deeply, the meaning and the glory of it?

We have thus noticed the fact stated. We have now to consider what was the design of it. Why did Christ come into the world? There must have been an adequate motive for a procedure so strange. The text tells us what that was. It was "to save sinners." "Christ came into the world to save sinners." The words, you see, are very plain, and they are also very comprehensive. There are no restrictions made—no limitations drawn. All have sinned, and Christ would have all to be saved. There is no sinner, and therefore there is no man, who may not say, Christ came into the world to save me. There is not one person here present who may not feel confident that Christ left the bosom of the Father, and toiled, suffered, and died on earth, for him, for her. There is no presumption in any of you believing and declaring that Christ died to redeem you. If the Gospel be true at all that is just as certain as that the sun rose this morning. It is most presumptuous even to imagine that Christ did not come to save you, or any other sinner, for it is to suspect Christ and His Apostles of having again and again declared what was false.



Whoever doubts that Christ came to save him, ought to be able to show either that he is not a sinner, or that although a sinner he is not lost. No man can prove either of these two things; but a great many men foolishly fancy them true, or at least feel and act as if they were true. Many fail to realise with any clearness or depth that they are sinners. They have not awakened to the consciousness of what a terrible evil sin is. Although poor they imagine themselves rich; although diseased and corrupt, yea dead, they imagine themselves sound and well, and quite alive. They feel no need of salvation, and therefore they despise it, spurn the offer of it, dislike the very sound of it.

Sinners like these, although they acknowledge themselves sinners, do not feel that they are lost, and hence do not feel their need of Christ as a real and present Saviour. A great many people imagine that Christ came to save them from the danger of being lost, came to save them from the consequences of their sin, came to save them from falling into eternal death, came to secure them a salvation to come—in other words, came to enable them to escape an external future hell and to open up to them an external future heaven.

This is a most inadequate and inaccurate view of Christ's work and purpose in coming into the world. It turns the Gospel upside down, and makes it of none effect, or of bad effect. Christ came to save us sinners because already lost, not to save us from the danger of being lost. He did not come to do what would have been manifestly unjust, namely, to save us from the consequences of sin, otherwise than by saving us from our sin itself. He came to save us from our sin; deliverance from the consequences of sin, so far as we are delivered from sin, follows as a natural result. He came to save sinners by rescuing them out of eternal death, not by preventing them falling into it, *i.e.* from *becoming* eternally dead. Every one who is destitute of that life in God which is the only eternal life is already dead, already in the state of eternal death. Christ came to give an actual present salvation; to deliver us from the hell of sin within us and to fill us with the heaven of holiness. Sin is the source and substance, the fire and the worm of hell, and from it Christ would save us *now*. Holiness

is the kingdom of heaven which He came to establish, and so the kingdom of heaven, He said, is within you, is here, is at hand. *Now* is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Seek, my friends, a present salvation; trust in no future salvation.

Have you ever wondered that God should not have made known to the psalmists and prophets of Israel anything about a future state, anything about what we commonly call heaven and hell? Perhaps if He had, the piety of His ancient people would have been less true, pure, and spiritual, than it was. At any rate we plainly see that professing Christians very generally so dreadfully abuse the doctrine of a future state as to change the perfect religion which Christ taught into one essentially different, one far inferior to ancient Judaism as it appears in the psalmists and prophets, and closely akin to heathenism.

The salvation which Christ really came to bestow is one which can only be understood, and will only be accepted, by those who feel aright the hatefulness of sin; who see that it must be its own worst punishment, and that, in fact, all the horrors and torments of hell lie so essentially enfolded within it that nothing can deliver us from them which does not deliver us from it. The primary idea of Christ's salvation is that of healing—the restoration of the soul from spiritual disease to spiritual health; from deadness and unsusceptibility to the presence and power, righteousness and love of God to a lively sense and appreciation of them. If we would know it and enjoy it we must apprehend and accept it as inherent in holiness. We must feel the degradation and bitterness, shame and guilt, of a state of sin, and learn to admire and love the beauty, the peace, the elevation, the glory, the essential blessedness of a state of spiritual purity. If we would enter into the heaven which Christ brought to light, that heaven must first enter into us. It must be within us even here on earth,—within us as the brightness of celestial light, as the fire of a holy purpose, as an energy of divine righteousness, as the music of a well-ordered soul, as the highest form of spiritual life, as rest and joy in God.

Seek, first and above all, dear friends, this salvation, this heaven, this kingdom of God, in which all things to be desired

by you are either included, or to which they will be added. Think of what it would be to you if you fully had it—of the essential peace of it, the elevation above passion and unregulated desire, the singleness and simplicity of it, the glowing shapes and glorified visions of a pure imagination, the oneness of your souls with God and their abundant participation in the good which is in God; think of this, and make it the one grand aim and effort of your lives fully to possess it.

You will not fail if you seek it earnestly in Christ. Christ is the power of God unto salvation. In so far as Christ is formed within you salvation must be realised by you. Take His example and work, His righteousness and love, home to your inmost hearts. Receive Him, and as ye receive Him walk in Him. Do this, and your souls will live; sin will die in them, and a glorious quickening will take place in them, with the spreading light of a new creation, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Amen.

## XVI.

### CHRIST SUFFERING FOR SINS.<sup>1</sup>

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”—1 PETER iii. 18.

THE Apostle is in the immediately preceding context exhorting his hearers to be, amidst all their trials and afflictions, followers of that which is good, righteous, kind, peaceable. If they are so he tells them that God will protect and bless them. They may have to suffer, but the eyes of the Lord are over them, and His ears are open unto their prayers, and they need have no fear. Happy are they, even in that they suffer.

But they must be on their guard not to have to suffer on account of evil-doing. They must be careful to keep a good conscience before God and to have a good conversation in Christ. If they sin it may be well that they should suffer for their sin, but it can never be well that they should sin in order to obtain good through suffering for their sin. No one is entitled to expect God's blessing on the suffering which he brings upon himself by disobedience to God's will.

In the text the Apostle seeks to confirm and enforce his exhortation by referring his readers to the example of Christ. He, their Lord, suffered, suffered to the uttermost; and sin was the cause. But not sin of His own. He suffered for sins, but for the sins of others. He suffered, the just for the unjust; and in order to accomplish a great, righteous, and merciful purpose—the bringing of men to God. If His followers are to suffer, as suffer they are sure to do, it ought to be as His followers, as animated by a somewhat similar spirit, as also eschewing evil and pursuing only good.

Such is the simple but conclusive argument which the

<sup>1</sup> Preached at the re-opening of the Abbey Church, Edinburgh, on Sunday forenoon, March 5th, 1899.

Apostle here employs. It is not the argument itself, however, which I wish at present to consider, but only the fact on which he rests it, the marvellous fact on which the whole Gospel of the grace of God to us centres, and on which it depends—the fact that “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

This fact is supremely worthy of our most serious consideration at any time. There can certainly be none more appropriate for our consideration at the present time, met, as we are, to commemorate this fact, and to show forth the sufferings and the death which Christ our Lord, the Holy One and the Just, in His infinite love for us sinners, endured that He might bring us to God, in whom alone our souls can find satisfaction and salvation.

The fact that Christ so suffered as He did is the central fact in the history of the world. It casts a wonderful light, especially over the whole history of religion. Christ so suffered as to prove Himself to be the one perfect priest of humanity, the offerer of the only perfect sacrifice; so suffered as to give the only and completely satisfactory response to all the real wants of human nature which had originated priesthood and sacrifice throughout all parts of the world. Even pagan priesthood and sacrifice did not spring merely or mainly out of imposition, but out of truths which are of the very essence of all religion—man’s sense of dependence on Deity and of his need of influence and reconciliation with Deity—and these truths have found their explanation and satisfaction in Christ alone. In the work which He accomplished by suffering and death, whatever of meaning and of truth there were not merely in Jewish priesthood and sacrifice, but in all priesthood and sacrifice, found fulfilment and perfecting. The entire history of priesthood and of sacrifice found on the cross of Christ both its judgment and its justification, the condemnation of the errors and evils which it has exhibited, and the realisation of all that it contained of prophecy and of promise.

To Israel God gave prophecy and the law, a specially appointed priesthood, and an elaborate system of sacrifices. But these all pointed to, united in, and found their completion

in Christ. He was the end or goal, the confirmation, and the substance of them all. They had their Yea and Amen in Him; but apart from Him they can only be regarded as illusive and untrue, or at least dead and ineffective. They are now either abolished because fulfilled by Him, or retained but vitalised, spiritualised, and magnified by His fulfilment of them and relationship to them. And it was especially through His once suffering, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, that this was effected; that the local and the temporary gave place to the universal and the eternal, the shadow to the substance.

The New Testament is throughout a proof of this. The Evangelists occupy about one third of the space which they devote to their narratives of Christ's life to the events of the single week of the Passion. Clearly they attributed to His sufferings and death an interest overshadowing all else recorded of Him. They show us how Christ Himself worked out His ministry with the consciousness that the great task of His life could only be accomplished through His being crucified and slain; and how on the night of His betrayal He instituted the sacrament of the Supper, and gave the command which secured that His death should be unceasingly commemorated as a sacrifice for sins until He come again.

When we pass from the Gospels to the Epistles we cannot fail to see at once that their authors wrote and lived in the firm conviction that what above all gave significance and efficacy to their teaching was the infinite virtue and value of the death of Christ. It was in His Cross that they gloried. They looked at all subjects of which they treated—the nature and character of God, the moral law and Divine government, human sin and its consequences, the Old Testament sacrifices and prophecies, the whole manifestation and mission of Christ, the functions and duties of the Church, and the destinies of mankind—in relation to it, and in the light which it cast upon them. They felt that it had opened up the one true way of justification and was the great source of sanctification. They saw in it the key to the mystery of the Divine method of salvation, of God's long labour to bring man back to love and obedience, to happiness and holiness.

They recognised with gratefulness and joy that His whole procedure with the human race had presupposed the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

In the wonderful series of apocalyptic visions with which the New Testament so aptly and grandly closes, the central figure, the object of universal adoration and praise, the Judge of all events, of all lives, of all nations, the Bestower of all blessings and honours, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, is the Lamb which had been slain.

Such, my friends, is the place which Divine revelation assigns to Christ's "once suffering for sins." It is not the place which man unenlightened by revelation would have assigned to it. That God should have determined so to save sinners is a most striking proof that His thoughts are not as our thoughts. It was the last thing man left to himself would have thought of, to build all his hopes and aspirations on a death of suffering and of shame.

When Christ was with His disciples He tried to lead them to anticipate the sort of death He would die, and to enlighten them as to the necessity of it. But they could not, and would not be convinced. Their minds revolted against the very idea; their hearts could not endure it. And when at last what they had been so often told, but never allowed themselves to credit, came about; when their Master was seized, tried, condemned, and crucified; when doubt was for ever thus summarily done away; they were overwhelmed. Although their love did not cease, their faith failed utterly. "We trusted," they said sadly, "that He would have redeemed Israel."

It needed Christ's resurrection and ascension, His appearances during the forty days and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, to enable even those who had been His most intimate companions to see His death in its true light: to recognise that they were erring from dulness of mind and slowness of heart to understand and believe their ancient Scriptures; that their central difficulty—the crucifixion of Jesus—was in fact an essential part of the counsel of God; that so far from it being true, as they had thought, that suffering was fatal to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, it was *necessary that the Christ should suffer and so enter into His glory.*

It was only then, and in a way which it is utterly in vain to attempt to explain naturally, that the great truth of "redemption through suffering" flashed upon them, filling their minds with a marvellous light, kindling in their hearts the fervid fire of self-sacrificing love, making luminous to them the whole course of their national history, showing them that the old order of things had passed away and one far grander had come in, animating them with a sublime confidence and an infinite hope, and recreating, as it were, their very selves. It was only then and so that there was effected that revolution in the souls of the first Christians which has revolutionised the world.

Henceforth they preached Christ crucified as "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." But everywhere they found man's natural tendency was to reject the doctrine with aversion and disdain. To the Jew it was a stumbling-block. To the Greek it seemed foolishness.

Since then many centuries have come and gone, and the Gospel has gained glorious triumphs in almost all lands. But "the offence of the cross" has never ceased. It has indeed to be admitted, and may gladly be admitted, that "the power of the cross" has made the very world itself less worldly, or at least less decidedly and openly anti-Christian than it once was; that even the world's opinion about the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Saviour has undergone a change for the better. The influence of that doctrine has been such that there are now few among us who will venture to express contempt for it, or even allow themselves consciously to cherish contempt for it within their own breasts. And even for such homage as this, even for such respectful neutrality of feeling as this, we may well be thankful.

Yet between this and the homage which is due to it,—the warm, living, and adoring recognition of the Divine wisdom, condescension, righteousness, and love, displayed in Christ's sacrifice of Himself on behalf of sinners,—there is a vast difference, an immeasurable distance, which the merely natural man, the selfish and sensuous man, the unthoughtful, unearnest, and unspiritual man, never traverses. Such a man necessarily, so long as he remains what he is, is blind to the real character



and significance of Christ's death. It is not, and cannot be, to him what it ought to be. He does not so view and accept it that it can accomplish in him the gracious and blessed ends for which it was ordained and endured. Instead of being treated by him as the wisdom and power of God, it is dealt with as if it were the foolishness and weakness of man.

Let us, my friends, not thus err. Let us abide by, and act on, God's judgment. What He deems wise and powerful is really so; and if we think otherwise it can only be because our minds are so darkened and perverted that they do not perceive and judge truly. The history of the more than eighteen centuries which have elapsed since Christ's death has amply proved God's thought of that death to be true, and the natural man's thought of it to be false. The Divine love revealed in the self-sacrifice of Christ has actually succeeded in doing what every other influence is incapable of doing. It has in every variety of circumstances shown that it can change the entire character of the human heart, and marvellously affect the conduct of man. It has dispelled the darkness which brooded over the minds of the most benighted heathens. A sense of it has sufficed to transform the most reprobate sinners into eminent saints. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said Christ, "will draw all men unto myself." And we may all now see that it is from the cross on which He was lifted up that He is exerting His greatest influence; that through the attractive power of the cross He is lifting up the world heavenwards; that by His cross He is reigning over His people, and triumphing over His foes and theirs.

The merely natural or worldly reason may deem this inexplicable, unreasonable. The spiritually enlightened reason will not. Whoever contemplates the death of Christ aright will not. Ah! the chief cause why men remain alienated from God is, it is to be feared, just that they do not draw near to the cross of His Son and steadily and reverently contemplate the crowning instance of Divine love there exhibited. Would they only in a patient, humble, prayerful spirit ponder on all that Holy Scripture teaches to be implied in "Christ's once suffering for sins," their own among them, all their doubts of God's infinite fatherly love could hardly fail to be

shamed away; and then sin would begin to wither and to die in them, bad thoughts and feelings to leave them, and bad modes of conduct to drop off. New hearts towards God and man would be given them. They would become new creatures in Jesus Christ.

The cross of Christ is indispensable to the attainment of a true salvation. Salvation is deliverance from the state of separation from God and of sin against God natural to fallen man, and restoration to such a position of harmony with God, that he who is the subject of it may be said *to live in and from God*. Nothing short of this is worthy to be regarded as salvation. There can be but one true life, one eternal life; and that life is from God, and characterised by its likeness to the life of God.

Such conformity to God as is the life and salvation of the soul can only come from God Himself. The nature and life of God to which we are to be conformed He must Himself reveal to us. His revelation of Himself in nature, however, is not enough for the needs of the sinner; nor even a revelation through miracles, visions, voices, institutions, words, such as He made to Israel. The only revelation which can alone meet the requirements of the case is a revelation in one who while representing truly the Divine Nature lives, acts, and suffers under human limitations and conditions; a revelation through a living soul, akin both to God and us, one who can truly "show us the Father," one who was "in the bosom of the Father," and can come with the mercy and love of the Father to draw us thereby into a transforming sympathy with God; one who comes at the same time as a human person, a veritable brother, that he may show the Divine beauty set in humanity, show the Divine love through suffering, and bind our hearts to his own, through an inter-consciousness of temptation, grief, and pain.

In Christ suffering for our sins the love of God comes direct and close to us, and in the way least possible for us to doubt its sincerity or intensity; or to refuse to return love for love. But to meet the love of God to us with love to Him is to be brought near to Him. Love is nearness. Enmity is distance. To have enmity cast out, and love brought in, this is all that is

needed that we may live near to God, and enjoy His communion, His abiding presence. When the soul attains this it has acquired its proper good, its true blessedness, that without which it never can have real rest or happiness.

But the only way in which it can attain this is the way which Christ opened up through His holy and generous sufferings unto death. Only when we truly realise through faith, when we sincerely take home into our hearts the significance, the spirit, of the pure, perfect, infinite, self-sacrificing love of the Son as revealed in the self-humiliation and agony of His death on the cross, can we savingly apprehend, or shall we rejoicingly accept that eternal love of God the Father, to know and abide in which is alone eternal life. Only thus can we attain access and nearness to God, communion with God.

And only thus can we retain it, and profit by it aright. Even they who have been brought to God may be greatly at fault by not valuing the blessing as they ought; for not delighting in and striving after ever closer communion with God, ever growing conformity to the will of God, as they ought.

That we might live *very* near to God; that we might live in the *full sense* of the love of God; that the love of God might *dwell richly* in us, and overflow to all God's children and to all God's creatures, was the end of Christ's death; and we should not be satisfied unless we feel that it is gaining its end in us. Let us beware lest Christ have suffered for us even partially in vain. Let us try to make use with our utmost diligence of the way which He opened up for us with so much labour and pain. Let us seek to enjoy to the full all those blessed influences and privileges of reconciliation and communion with God which He procured for us at such an incalculable cost of sacrifice and suffering.

To this end may God grant His blessing on what has now been said. And to His name be glory for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I have now, my friends, delivered unto you the message of my text, but it is only fitting that I should add a few words

having reference to the special circumstances in which we meet to-day.

You have, after a lengthened absence from this your own place of worship, the satisfaction of finding yourselves again within its walls, and the satisfaction also of seeing that it has been enlarged, greatly beautified, and in all respects improved. Its interior is now, I think, almost all that could be desired: it is beautiful to the eye, commodious and comfortable, and admirably suited for the various services of religion. You may well congratulate yourselves on the many changes for the better which have been made in it, and may reasonably regard its re-opening to-day as an outstanding date in the history of your Church.

That history has not been a lengthened one—the Abbey Church was erected in 1875–76—but it has been all the more largely on that account a history of your own making, one in which many of you must have taken a lively interest and an active share. And it has been a very prosperous and creditable history. Situated as it is where it is greatly needed, it has been an immense boon to this part of Edinburgh. The zealous and faithful labours and self-sacrificing character of its first pastor, Mr. Milne, ought to be long and gratefully remembered. You all know how altogether exceptional has been the increase of its membership and of its general prosperity under the pastorate of my friend Mr. Sabiston. So far, indeed, as that is concerned there is now nothing to desire.

Yet you are not so prosperous but that I may reasonably wish, as I do most sincerely wish, that, through God's blessing, you may have uninterrupted and ever increasing prosperity. There is always room for growth in grace. To spiritual improvement there need be no limit or end. What I above all wish for you, however, is just that as a congregation you may make continuous spiritual progress; and that as members thereof your souls may always prosper more and more through your connection with it. But if this wish is to be realised, it can assuredly only be so through a steadily increasing faith among you in the truth on which I have to-day addressed you.

When Emerson visited Carlyle at Craigenputtock, the latter, pointing towards the parish church, said to his American friend,

“Christ’s death built Dunscore Church yonder.” And so it had. And it has built the Abbey Church here too, and indeed all the churches of Christendom; and not one of them can firmly stand or truly prosper on any other foundation than that which Christ has laid for them by “His once suffering for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” The life of all our churches has had its source in Christ’s death.

Churches, we must remember, are not, in any Scriptural sense of the term, merely material houses—buildings composed of dead stones, wood, and lime. We are accustomed, indeed, to call certain of such edifices *churches*, and to cherish, as is most befitting, reverential feelings and hallowed associations in connection with them; but, in reality, *Churches* are, as St Peter has reminded us, “spiritual houses”—edifices composed of *living stones*, savingly united to the one head corner-stone, chosen of God and precious, which has life in itself and is the source of life to all the stones in close connection with it. The one true Christian Church in the world is the whole body of true believers in Christ throughout the whole world. The only true Christian Church in any given place consists of the truly Christian souls in that place—those who belong to the one vast undivided and indivisible body of Christ—not the dead stones of any material house, but the living stones of a spiritual house. The true Abbey Church is not the material building so called but the spiritual building within that building.

It is only “spiritual houses” which are truly Christian temples. It is only in them that God spiritually and efficaciously dwells; only in them that there is a holy priesthood, and where every Christian is a priest; only in them that spiritual sacrifices truly acceptable to God are offered up, because offered up and sanctified through faith in Christ’s sacrifice of Himself. And the prosperity, my friends, which I would above all else wish for you is the prosperity of a truly Christian Church—the prosperity of a growingly spiritual and Christian life. My chief and most earnest wish for you as a congregation is that all your souls may prosper, that they may all become always more closely joined to Christ, and to one another through union with Christ; always increasingly

quicken and strengthen, enlighten and sanctify by communion with Christ. For if it be well with you *so*, all will be well with you. That will bring with it all real congregational prosperity.

If you have that you will also have, for example, the great blessing of peace and harmony. No petty jealousies, ambitions, or differences will separate and disturb you. You will be kindly affectioned towards one another. You will feel that you have much in common—one Father, one Saviour, one sanctifying Spirit; that you are all members of the same household of faith, living under the same Divine Law, and with the same great interests and glorious hopes; that you are one in Christ, one with each other, and bound to subordinate everything to the advancement of the one great cause, the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Further, if you have the blessing of which I speak there will not fail to be found among you willing workers for Christ in the different spheres in which as a congregation you have need of them. All reasonable calls for Christian service addressed to you from this pulpit will, in that case, meet with ready responses. There will be no necessity for any importunate begging on behalf of any worthy object or scheme. A mere statement of its claims will be sufficient. Those of you who have the appropriate talents for teaching with advantage in the Sabbath-school, or aiding in the work of the choir, or taking part in district visitation, or co-operating with the minister in the general administration of the affairs of the congregation, will be ready and glad so to put them out to usury in the service of their Lord and Master. Those who have not such talents will be at least ready and glad to give what encouragement they can to those who have them and who are employing them for the general good, and will not forget to pray for a blessing on their endeavours.

And further, if you prosper in the spiritual life as a Christian congregation may and should, your sympathies will extend far beyond the limits of the congregation itself. You will realise that you have duties to the community around you, to the National Church of which this congregation is a component part, and to the Christian Church as a whole. You

will not be backward in giving your support to the cause of Christ in any form. You will desire and endeavour to be always on the Lord's side.

Seek, pray, and labour, then, my friends, to grow steadily and continually, to grow day by day, and year by year, in grace, in the knowledge and love of your Heavenly Father, in faith in Christ your Saviour, and in dependence on the Holy Spirit, for assuredly if you do so God will withhold from you nothing that is truly for your good either as individuals or as a congregation.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## XVII.

### THE LAMB OF GOD.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—JOHN i. 29.

**O**N the day before John had already borne very distinct and impressive witness to Jesus.

The verses immediately preceding our text tell us of its occasion and nature. John had himself made a great impression on the minds of his countrymen. Many of them were expecting the appearance of some one to raise and liberate Israel. And hence when John, who was known to have been set apart from his birth to a Divine mission, and to have led from childhood a rigidly ascetic, devout, and righteous life in preparation for it, at length came forth from his seclusion, confidently proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God, summoned sinners to immediate repentance and an entire change of heart and conduct, and began, without asking leave of any one, to baptize and to gather around him disciples, great multitudes naturally flocked to hear him, and not a few began to think that he might be the mighty one whom they had been taught by ancient prophecy to look for.

Such being the state of the public mind, it seemed good to those who exercised ecclesiastical power among the Jews to send from Jerusalem a deputation of priests and Levites to obtain from his own lips an explanation as to who he was and by what authority he spoke and acted as he did.

John had no high opinion of the priests and Levites of his day, and he does not seem to have said more to those sent to him than was just needed to answer the questions which they put to him. But his answers were exceedingly clear and candid. Was he the Christ, the Messiah? He fully acknowledged that he was not. Was he Elijah, who, according to Malachi, was to be “sent before the coming of the great and



terrible day of the Lord"? No, he was not Elijah come back to earth. Was he *the* prophet "like unto Moses" promised in the Book of Deuteronomy? He was not *that prophet* either. Who, then, *was* he? And since neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the second Moses, what authority had he for speaking and acting as he did, and especially for requiring Jews, the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, to submit to a rite which implied that they were impure—no better than Gentiles?

When thus questioned, his answer was a testimony on behalf of Christ, all the more impressive because of the dignity, the reserve, the coldness which he had just shown towards the priests and Levites. This severe ascetic, this great prophet, when he has to consider his relation to the Christ at once shows how really humble he is, how insignificant he feels himself to be. He the Christ! No! he is nobody. He is a mere voice—a voice without worth or meaning apart from the Divine Word to which it refers—a voice calling upon God's people to repentance in preparation for the coming of Him who was already among them although they knew Him not. His own baptism was only one of water merely pointing to another baptism which only the Christ could give. His own mission had all its significance and authority from another Teacher, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

John could not have expressed more clearly his recognition, or more strongly his sense, of his own inferiority to Jesus than he thus did. The humility which he showed was soon to meet with its reward. The next day John had the opportunity given him to make his testimony complete and precise. He saw Jesus coming towards him, and near enough for some recognition. When he saw Him, he pointed Him out to those who were around him, and cried aloud, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

His cry was one of joy, the cry of a man who had found what he desired above all else, and what he knew the world needed beyond all else. And the position in which he stood when he uttered it was one of wondrous privilege; one which fully accounts for our Saviour having said of him that he was "a prophet, and much more than a prophet"; that "among

those born of women there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." The narrative before us is the best commentary on these words. The whole history of true religion in the past, with all its rites and sacrifices, precepts and prophecies, had been crying to men to wait and watch for what John was permitted to see. The great distinction denied to the wisest and best men of former ages was reserved for him; even that of looking on the face of the Son of Man, the Hope of Israel, and the Desire of all nations, and as the voice of the whole ancient economy gathering up all its cries of distress, inquiry, and expectation in one cry of joy and certainty and discovery, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Truly he was a prophet, and much more than a prophet.

Yet we must not forget that Christ also said that "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." We cannot reasonably suppose that John even in that moment of high inspiration from the living God, when he uttered the words recorded in the text, had in his mind all the thoughts and feelings which they naturally call up in us who interpret them in the light of Christ's life and death, of the teaching of the Apostles, and the Christian reflection and experience of centuries. We have no right to attribute to him views and theories of sacrifice and atonement, of substitution and imputation, of grace and justification, which have only grown up within the Christian Church. To the very close of his career he would seem to have fancied that Christ was to be a temporal king and conqueror as well as a moral and spiritual reformer. Had he realised as the simplest of Christians, the least in the kingdom of heaven, cannot fail to do, what Christ's being *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world* implied, his mind would not have been distracted by the doubts and fears which visited him while he lay a prisoner in the fortress of Machærus.

On the other hand, the words of the Baptist in themselves undoubtedly mean more than he can have with clear consciousness meant by them. They were more comprehensive and profound than he was aware of. So is it often with the words of a man of genius. Still more so is it with the words prompted

by special divine inspiration. The prophets of necessity frequently gave utterance to truths wider and richer in significance than they or their contemporaries could realise.

And, I think, we shall assuredly not fall into error if we regard the exclamation of John as an admirable expression in words of what the sacred symbols spread on a communion table show forth in sensible signs. Both the words and the signs convey the same cry. Both tell us to contemplate joyously, reverently, lovingly the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. The words of the Baptist were the assurance that the goal alike of ancient law and prophecy—that the burden of all prediction and the fulfilment of all promise made to God's people in past ages—was at length found; and the symbols of communion confirm the assurance, and teach us that whosoever believeth in Christ, feeding on Him by faith, receiving into his soul the benefits of His death, trusting in His merits, and rejoicing in the fulness of His love and grace, is no longer under condemnation, but hath eternal life abiding and working in him.

*Behold the Lamb of God.* This mode of speech shows that the Baptist had in his mind some known and special lamb; some lamb revealed by God, provided by God, pleasing to God, so as to be peculiarly God's lamb; and at the same time some lamb familiar to John's hearers.

What lamb was it to which he looked back as a type of Christ? There has been much difference of opinion on the subject. Some have supposed that it was the lamb of the daily sacrifice. But the Baptist's expression is too definite to have so general a reference as to the lambs of the daily morning and evening sacrifice. And, besides, these lambs were not used in sin-offerings properly so-called.

Others have held that it was to the paschal lamb that the Baptist referred. It has been said that "as the sacrifice of the first paschal lamb procured redemption or deliverance from the plague that smote and destroyed the Egyptians, so did the sacrifice of the Lamb of God procure eternal redemption for His people, or take away the sins of the world." But against this interpretation it has to be said that the paschal sacrifice was, indeed, in the Jewish mind, connected with deliverance,

but not in any special way with the removal of sin. We know of no mention of sin or of the taking away of sin having been made to the Jews before the time of John the Baptist in connection with the paschal lamb. The relationship of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb to the crucifixion of our Lord is, indeed, indubitable and most wonderful, but it was one which could only be distinctly perceived when the antitype as well as the type was present to the mind, or, in other words, *after* the institution of the sacrament of the Supper, after the death of Christ, and the founding of His Church. Then it became obvious that He was "our Passover," and more,—the Lamb of God through whose sacrifice sin was not merely passed over, but effectively expiated and removed,—no merely temporary shadow or symbol, but the realisation of eternal spiritual truth, of absolute Divine love and righteousness.

I do not venture to deny that there may have been some indirect reference in the thought and language of John to the lambs of the daily sacrifice, or to the paschal lamb; but it seems to me that there is very little doubt that the reference was, chiefly at least, to the lamb of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah; that the Baptist followed the guidance of the prophet who there exhibited the Servant of God as meekly and gently accepting humiliation, misery, shame, and death, in order to take away the sins of the people. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." And so on, as you have heard read to-day.

Nowhere else did ancient prophecy rise to such a height as in this description of the suffering Servant of Jehovah. There is nothing of the same kind which can be put on nearly the same level even in the Old Testament. It was so unique, so inapplicable to any known historical individual, so plainly figurative, so certainly meant to indicate the innermost secret

of God's method of dealing with Israel, that it could not fail strongly to attract to itself the attention of every pious and thoughtful Hebrew.

In the New Testament Christ is spoken of as a lamb in thirty-one passages, twenty-nine of which belong to a single book, the Apocalypse. It is quite clear that the source whence the writer of the Apocalypse drew his love for likening Christ to a lamb was the marvellous picture of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Certain also is it, I think, that John the Baptist must have had the same picture before his mental vision when looking upon Jesus he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God."

He knew of the strange events associated with the birth of Jesus. He must have heard of His blameless life, His singular wisdom, His pious zeal. He felt Him to be one far greater and better than himself, and with a higher and more enduring work to do. And now he saw Him come forth publicly to make known and to do the Heavenly Father's will. What more natural than that, while noting His meekness and gentleness, and anticipating the resistance and contradiction which He would meet with from a disobedient and gainsaying people, the whole vision of the Suffering Servant of the Lord should rise before his mind, and that there should spring up with it the thought, Here is the Lamb of God! Here at length is He in whom all that the great prophet spake will be fulfilled. We know how wonderfully it has been fulfilled. Not a word of it has been allowed to fall in vain to the ground.

But John did not say merely, *Behold the Lamb of God*. He added, *which taketh away the sin of the world*. He looked, it is evident, to find in Christ a Saviour from spiritual as well as from temporal evils. Many of the Jews desired to see the Messiah merely because they wished a national deliverer, one who would raise up fallen Israel to higher prosperity and greater power than she had ever had. But, of course, so unworthy a conception could not, and did not, satisfy the more earnest and pious-minded among the Jews. Although they also looked and longed for Messiah to come as a temporal and national King and Conqueror, they looked and longed still more for a spiritual deliverance to be effected by Him, a

victory over sin to be achieved, a reign of righteousness to be established.

So was it with John the Baptist. Patriot although he was, and with all a patriot's zeal for his country's glory, the thought about Messiah which held the first and deepest place in his mind was that he would take away the sin of the world. He felt that of all evils sin was the worst; that it was the root of all other evils; that deliverance from it was the only true and thorough deliverance from evil which either an individual or a nation could hope to experience. He had a strong love of righteousness and a strong hatred of sin. Had he not he would have been a most unworthy herald of the coming of Christ; for to save and purify men from sin was the primary and chief reason why Christ came to earth to suffer and die.

The word which John employed to denote the action of the Lamb of God on sin is rightly rendered *taketh away*. It does not mean merely *bearing up* or *sustaining* but *bearing away* or *removing*. The *bearing away* may, however, include the *bearing*. Christ by bearing sin may bear it away. But undoubtedly John was thinking less of Christ's taking the burden of sin upon Himself than of His taking it off mankind. He regarded that burden as a load weighing upon men, and which they had strength enough neither to support nor to cast off. And he looked on the Lamb of God as carrying it away from them.

What is the sin which according to John the Lamb of God takes away? The prophet in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah said, "for the transgression of my people was he stricken." His horizon was that of the Jewish world. He thought only of the redemption of Israel. The view of the Baptist embraces the human race. His words—most precious and blessed words—are that the Lamb of God *taketh away the sin of the world*; that is, the whole enormous mass of iniquity which is in the world, which burdens and blights the world; the sin of which original depravity is as it were the root, vicious habits the branches, thoughts, words, and deeds of impiety and injustice the leaves and fruits. John comprehends all in one general word. He speaks of sin as a whole. It has parts indeed, but these may all be referred as it were to one body of sin, whether original or actual, whether of feeling or thought, of word or

deed, whether directly against God's glory or our neighbour's welfare.

Let any man's sin be what it may Christ has died to take it away, and will take it away if the man will allow Him; will only accept the help which he needs, and which the Saviour is most anxious to give. Every sin of every sinner Christ is willing to take away, "*The sin of the world*" is John's expression; and no man can say that he and his sin are not included therein. God's wish is that every man should be saved. He willeth not the death of any sinner; and if a sinner perversely refuse life and choose death he has no right to throw the blame or any part of it on a merciful and gracious God.

We have come together this day to show forth the death of Christ, to celebrate the love and grace manifested to us in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. May the words of the Baptist and the elements of communion conjoin through the power of Divine grace to help us to do so aright; may they encourage and assist us to contemplate the Lamb of God slain for our offences, and to yield ourselves up to be saved from our sins through His work on our behalf.

When we think what that work was—when we think, as we should, of all that He endured for our sakes in carrying out His errand of unspeakable mercy towards us, assuredly the liveliest gratitude of which our nature is susceptible should be awakened within us at the table of communion, and may even well be felt by us but a poor offering to bring to it.

It is, however, all that we can bring to it. Therefore let us lay aside this day all groundless and unworthy anxiety and fear. Let us look away from ourselves and our inherent helplessness to the efficacy of our Saviour's sacrifice and the boundlessness of His love. Let us behold with the eye of a sincere and steady faith the Lamb of God as "taking away the sin of the world," and especially that part of "the sin of the world" which concerns *us* most, even that part of it which belongs to *ourselves*. Let us behold Him as the Lamb slain *for us*, who is bearing away *our iniquities*, who is setting *our selves* free from sin and death. And may the Spirit of the living God be with us all, and grant to us a time of refreshing, grateful on earth, and gratefully to be remembered in eternity. Amen.

## XVIII.

### ENDS OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION.<sup>1</sup>

“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”  
—ROMANS iv. 25.

**T**HE truths conveyed to us in these words are of vital importance. A Christian life is just a life which is habitually influenced and governed by them. The Gospel so centres in them, and is to so great an extent summed up in them, that it can never be inopportune for a preacher of the Gospel to remind his hearers of them.

There is, however, a special reason why I should direct your attention to them at this time.

You are looking forward as a congregation of Christian believers to participating on Sabbath next in the sacrament which Christ Himself graciously instituted as the means by which His people were to show forth His death and their own interest therein. And there can be no more appropriate preparation for a worthy and beneficial partaking of the sacrament of the Supper than pious meditation on the nature and significance of the death which it commemorates. But it is impossible to think aright of Christ's death without thinking of it in connection with His victory over death. That He was delivered for our offences would not have availed for our redemption had He not been also raised for our justification. The only truly saving relation of a soul to Christ is one which is rooted in faith both on His dying and on His rising again, both on His crucifixion and on His resurrection.

I may add that the week on which we have now entered will be regarded by the vast majority of devout Christians throughout the world as the holiest week of the Christian year, because of its associations with the death of Christ, and next Sabbath as the most joyous day of the Christian year,

<sup>1</sup> Preached on Palm Sunday in St Stephen's Church, Edinburgh.



the brightest and best of its Sundays, because the one which most distinctly declares to them, "The Lord is risen indeed." It can do us only good if we too are enabled thus to feel. The words of St Paul in our text are directly fitted to help us so to feel. As we meditate on them for a little, may the Holy Spirit so apply them to our hearts that they will produce in us their due effects.

Christ, the Apostle tells us, was "delivered for our offences," *was given up for our trespasses*. He does not merely refer us to the fact of Christ's death. He also indicates the origin and the end, the cause and purpose of that death. It is always so that Scripture presents Christ's death to us. And for the obvious reason that to view it otherwise, to contemplate it simply in itself, to regard it merely as an isolated event apart from the grounds and the issues of it, must be an unintelligent and unprofitable way of considering it.

Hence St Paul here tells us not merely that Christ humbled Himself, suffered, and died for us, but that He was "delivered," *given up, handed over*, to humiliation, suffering, and death. God gave Him up to death for us all. The true and primary cause of His death was the consent of the Eternal Father's will to His death. The Jewish priests who contrived His death, Judas who betrayed Him, the mob which clamoured for His death, the unjust judge who pronounced sentence of condemnation upon Him, Herod who mocked Him, and the murderers who nailed Him to the cross, had all their share of responsibility for His death; but the power which they had over Him was a power given to them from above. The Father could at any moment have scattered the counsels and frustrated the efforts of those miserable men. One word, one single movement of Christ's own will would have done so. He Himself tells us that He had only to ask the Father and legions of angels would be forthwith sent to His aid. But neither the Father nor the Son would exert their power to ward off the pain and shame of the death on the cross. It was necessary that Christ should suffer and die as He did. It was necessary for the sake of mankind, for all our sakes, that Christ should so suffer and die, and therefore the Father willed that He should so suffer and die; and the Son freely

and fully assented to the Father's will, and humbly and faithfully acted on it until it was completely realised, until it was "finished."

This word "delivered" points us, then, directly to the source of the salvation which has come to the world through the death of Christ. It shows us that death not as a mere link in the chain of events, not as a mere fact in the course of destiny, although it was foreordained from eternity, but as a revelation of the mind and heart of the Eternal Father towards His disobedient and rebellious children, a wondrous disclosure of the infinite love which had never ceased to follow them, but had clung to them, never let them go, and at length sacrificed what was dearest to it in order to win them back to itself.

The death of Christ can only be to us what it was meant to be when it is viewed as at once an exhibition of the wondrous love of Christ Himself towards us, and as the best and greatest gift of the love of His Father to us; only when we see the love of the Father shining on us in and through the sufferings of His Son, and feel it lighting up and quickening our naturally dark and dead hearts. "God is love." And nowhere has God as Infinite Love been so clearly and fully revealed as in the death of His Son. It is a *unique revelation* of the Divine love; such a revelation as could not be made otherwise,—as could not be made through mere nature or history, through mere miracle or prophecy, through mere inspired speech or writing. It was absolutely necessary for the complete development and disclosure of the Fatherly love of God, and nothing else can sufficiently show us, or bring adequately home to us, what that love is.

Our text reminds us, however, that we must trace back the death of Christ to more than mere love of God. It tells us that Christ was "*delivered for our offences.*" God gave Him up to suffer and die on our behalf not merely because He loved us, but also because there was an obstacle to His love resting on us and blessing us which could only be removed through Christ's suffering unto death. That obstacle was a vast and awful one. It was "our offences," the trespasses of the human race, the iniquities of us all. These had to be testified against. Their

enormity had to be made manifest. The penalties due to them had to be borne. A method of forgiving them consistent with the claims of perfect justice and all the moral interests of the universe had to be found and followed. Sin had to be conspicuously condemned, its power decidedly broken, and an effective means of expelling and destroying it provided. In a word, the moral purity, the righteousness, the holiness of God, required not less imperatively than His love, His tenderness, His mercy, to be vindicated and displayed in the redemption of mankind.

True love and true righteousness can never be opposed or even separated. It is neither reasonable nor scriptural to regard the death of Christ as a manifestation of a justice in God independent of love, and there is no such spurious justice in God. His justice even in the punishment of sin ceases not to be conjoined with love of the sinner, and inasmuch as it seeks the righteousness of those with whom it deals it tends also to their happiness. So equally it is neither reasonable nor scriptural to regard the death of Christ as a manifestation of a love in God which is irrespective of justice, and there is in God no such false love. When He delivered up Christ it was to "take away the sin of the world"; it was "to redeem us from all iniquity."

And nothing could be more fitted to do so. The fact that Christ required to be "delivered for our offences" of itself shows as nothing else could conceivably do how terribly serious these offences are in God's sight and in real fact. We often think of our offences with a strange levity, hardly feeling them burdening or troubling our consciences at all. Yet they were what caused Christ to suffer and to die. Yes, as truly as the offences of Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, of the Jewish Pharisees and the Roman soldiers, our offences inflicted on Him the indignities and agonies of which we read in the Gospels; betrayed Him, roused up and armed His enemies against Him; forced the bloody sweat from His brow and groans from His breast. It was our sins, the iniquities of us all, the ungodliness, the untruthfulness, the unbelief, pride, dishonesty, lust, cruelty, of each and every member of our rebellious race, which tortured His body, pierced His soul, and deprived Him of life.

And when we are tempted to think with indifference of the sinfulness of our sins we have only to look at them seriously in the light which streams from the cross in order to see how foolish and wrong it must be to regard them in such a way. Calvary shows us what God thought of them, how Christ felt towards them, and what it must have cost us if we had required to atone for all the evil we had done. Well may we glory in "the offence of the cross," were it only that it so clearly discloses to us the hatefulness of our own offences and so impressively warns us to strive to offend no more.

The phrase "delivered for our offences," I must further add, reminds us that Christ's death stands to our sins in a relation which no other death has held or can hold to them. It indicates a specific difference—a distinct difference in kind—between the death of Christ and the death of any merely human martyr. The martyrs have died for our instruction and our good. They have given us by their deaths glorious and affecting evidences of self-sacrifice, courage, and sincerity, of their piety towards God and of their love to their fellow-men. But none of them died for our sins. It would be an utter abuse of language to speak of the death of any of them in such a way. Christ alone was crucified for us; alone was "delivered for our offences." His death has a character, a glory, and an efficacy which belong to no other death.

It was a death in our room and stead. It was the death of one who took on Him the nature of man, and became not merely a man among men, but *the man* as no one else, the second Adam, the spiritual head of a new humanity, which God cannot view as without Christ but as in Christ, and therefore carrying within it the all-availing expiation effected by Christ. No death save the death of one whose love, righteousness, and obedience were perfect, who united Godhead and Manhood in His person, and who freely and fully identified Himself with men, and sacrificially substituted Himself for them, could have been the condemnation of human sin, the satisfaction of Divine justice, and the ground of reconciliation between God and man, which was required.

The perfect life ending in the holy death of the Incarnate One could alone remove the tremendous obstacle to the loving

action of God's will in the world presented by human wickedness and guilt; could alone open a way in which the Divine love might find full scope and exercise; and could alone succeed in effectively awakening spiritual life in those who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Such being the case, there is surely wonderful comfort for us in the assurance that *Christ was delivered for our offences*. It gives us precisely the information which our consciences most need. It tells us that there is forgiveness for us with God; that we are free from the curse of a broken law; that we may reasonably hope to be cleansed from our sins.

But there is also something very serious in it. It is a warning to us that there is no other salvation for us than that which is offered us through faith in Christ; that there is no other remedy than the one which He has wrought out. Choice between the acceptance or rejection of Christ is choice between life and death. No one has died for our offences but Christ, and no one else can save us from our offences and their consequences.

Let us now pass to the other truth which our text states. Here I shall be very brief. Christ was *raised again* for our justification. This is, of course, not equivalent to denying that Christ also *died* for our justification. It is, however, quite in accordance with the usual language of St Paul to connect Christ's death specially with the believer's sin and Christ's resurrection specially with the believer's justification. Christ died for our sins in order that through union with Him we might die unto sin. Christ rose again that through union with Him we might rise into newness of life.

Christ, our mediator, being not only very man, but also of a heavenly and divine nature, begotten by the power not of flesh and blood, but of the Holy Spirit, could not remain subject to death. He submitted Himself to its sway for a time, in order to discharge the office which, out of infinite love to men, He had undertaken, but that being accomplished, His nature inevitably asserted its superiority to such bondage, and returned to its true condition and to the enjoyment of its own inherent divine life.

And even apart altogether from the origin and character of His nature, His office and our advantage demanded that He should rise from the dead. And this is what the Apostle had in view when He tells us that Christ was *raised again for our justification*.

Christ by His sufferings and death had atoned for our sins. To that atonement as such nothing required to be added. It was perfect and all-sufficient in itself. It needed only to be accepted. But it did need to be accepted. The benefits of it can only be enjoyed by those who believe in it; who appropriate the truth and the love and the grace which are in it. The death of Christ must leave in condemnation—and even in many cases deepen their condemnation—those who have no belief in its importance, no real sense of their interest in it. Without faith there can be no justification.

But could there be faith in Christ at all—any real, operative, and saving faith—had there been no resurrection? No.

Had our Lord left His body lying in the sepulchre, how could we have supposed that He had been able to raise others from the sleep of death? How could we have been assured that His obedience and sacrifice had been perfectly acceptable to the Father? Who sees not that in such a case our faith must have remained buried in the same dust which covered His body? Could we fail, had He never risen, to regard Him otherwise than as not the true Son of God but a mere man like ourselves? The death of Christ, had it not been followed by His resurrection, must have seemed simply the calamitous end of a strange enthusiast who had undertaken more than He could accomplish, and promised what was never fulfilled. Had Christ Himself not been raised there could have been no Gospel, as there has been, to “bring life and immortality to light,” and to make what had been previously only a vague and dreary anticipation a blessed and a welcome certainty.

It is only through knowing that Christ rose from the dead that we can firmly believe in His Eternal Sonship, in His atoning death, in His now living and reigning with God, and that we can look forward with joyous confidence

to being for ever with Him, and finding all His promises fulfilled.

The Christian Church arose out of assurance of the resurrection. It triumphed through that assurance. It would dissolve and die were it to lose it. And the power of the resurrection gives to the life of each individual Christian, hopefulness, strength, gladness, and its pure and heavenly character. The life of the Christian is life in the risen Lord, life hid with Christ in God, resurrection life, life which has been raised out of death and the dust and now through its union with the life of the Risen Saviour seeks to be ever with Him and aspires to heavenly holiness. The power of the resurrection raises the soul above the world and produces and sustains in it the life which God approves. Christ was raised again for our justification.

Let us all, then, my friends, sincerely receive Christ both as delivered for our sins and as raised again for our justification. Let us pray for an ardent desire to share alike in the fruit of His sufferings and in the power of His resurrection. Let us to this end make a good use of the week before us. Let us read and try to realise what the Evangelists have written for our instruction as to what took place in and around Jerusalem in that memorable week ushered in by the day when crowds escorted Jesus into the city, shouting Hosannas, and which ended with the day when, after having suffered many and awful things at the hands and for the sins of men, yea, being crucified, dead, and buried, He rose victorious from the grave, the Conqueror of Sin and Death, the Lord of Life. Let us prayerfully try to take home to our hearts the lessons of every incident connected with our Lord's death and resurrection, to retain them there, and to allow them to bear their appropriate fruits in our lives.

Let us beware lest Christ have either died or risen for us wholly or even partially in vain. Let us seek to enjoy to the full all those blessed influences and privileges of reconciliation and communion with God which He procured for us both through His crucifixion and through His resurrection.

To this end may we use aright, and find richly helpful, the sacred ordinance in which we are so soon to participate. To

this end may God incline and inspire our hearts to join in it aright, humbly to receive the great truths which it so impressively proclaims, and eagerly to appropriate the sustenance and the benefits which it is designed to supply for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

To this end also may God grant His blessing on what has now been said. And to His name be glory for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## XIX.

### CHRIST MADE UNTO US WISDOM.

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 Cor. i. 30.

ST PAUL begins this chapter—begins this epistle—by expressing thankfulness for the manifold gifts of knowledge and teaching which the Corinthians had received from God, and hope that the good work which had been begun in them would be continued to the end. He then proceeds to censure them for their divisions, and to enjoin them to free themselves from the spirit of party and to remember their unity in Christ. This leads him to insist that he had not laboured among them to form a party—that he had not baptized into his own name or sought to have men calling themselves adherents of his—that his great object, the aim to which all else had been subordinated, was the preaching of the Gospel, the making known the way of salvation through Christ. This leads him to state and vindicate the subject and manner of his preaching. There seems to have been much unprofitable discussion about that among the Christians of Corinth. Living in a city full of rhetoricians and philosophers, some of them had begun to despise the simple, unadorned, substantial, practical Gospel teaching which he had given them. There was also a strong Jewish party, and many of its members hankered after signs, wonders of mere power. In the latter part of this chapter St Paul is speaking very directly and plainly to both of these classes, but especially to the former.

He says, as it were, It is perfectly true that I preached to you plainly and without eloquence about a crucified Jesus only. I glory in that. It is in the tidings of a crucified Messiah, not in human wisdom and eloquence, that the true enlightenment and life of the soul are to be found. What has been done by your philosophers, your logicians, your orators and disputers?

Why, with all their wisdom, they have remained in awful ignorance of the true God and His blessed will. God has proved their wisdom to be merest folly. And it has pleased Him to manifest His wisdom and saving power by what seems to them folly and weakness. I, therefore, and those who are like-minded, set at nought the wisdom of the world, and proclaim, announce, Christ Crucified. True, that is a message which neither Jew nor Greek willingly accepts; the Jew craves for an outward miraculous manifestation of power, and is scandalised by the idea of a Messiah who was put to death as a malefactor; the Greek seeks for a philosophy, for a theory which will exercise his intellectual subtilty and gratify his intellectual curiosity, and to him the proclamation of a redemption through Christ crucified appears to be folly; but, in reality, in spite of the imaginations of the natural mind and heart in Jew and Greek, it is to all, whether Jew or Greek, who have been called into God's Church and kingdom, the power of God,—a power far greater than that which could be displayed by any sign from heaven or outward miracle,—and the wisdom of God,—a far greater manifestation of wisdom than any system of speculation ever devised by the human intellect.

“The foolishness of God”—that way of God which is esteemed foolishness by you Greeks—“is wiser than all the wisdom of men,” and the man who chooses it, however unlearned, however ignorant, however little you may esteem his mind, is wiser far than the wisest of your philosophers; and “the weakness of God”—that way of saving men which is weak in the eyes especially of you Jews—“is stronger than the power of men,” delivering from the bondage of sin, subduing and sanctifying the heart, and overcoming obstacles as no human power can do. “For you see your calling, brethren”—you must discern if you look to the manner and circumstances of your conversion to Christianity—how the Divine Wisdom has so ordered it that not many who are wise in the estimation and with the wisdom of this world, not many who are powerful or noble have been “called”—have been put into possession of the hopes and promises of the Gospel or been made use of to propagate it; but “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world”—that simple way of instructing mankind which many count foolishness, and

those unlearned Apostles whom they represent as fools—"to confound the wise"—those philosophers, those searchers into nature's secrets—who, with all their wisdom and searching, have really found so little; "and God hath chosen the weak things of the world"—poor fishermen and tent-makers, for instance, assisted by no human force—"to confound the things which are mighty"—to break through the opposition of the peoples, the priests, the kings of the earth, and to pull down the strongholds, cast down the reasonings, and level the heights of the philosophers who exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ. "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea and things which are not, hath God chosen to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence."

This leads the Apostle to the wonderful utterance from which I take my text. Before God, man has nothing in himself, nothing of his own, in which he can glory. Before God, and in himself, he is a being made up of wants which he cannot supply by his own powers and exertions. He has a spiritual blindness which prevents him from perceiving the truth most necessary for his guidance as a spiritual being. He has tendencies to sin which can only be resisted by the working of another power than his own sinful self-will. He requires a reconciliation with God not of his own making. The law of God is a law which demands a reasonableness, a purity, a justice, a holiness, which no man renders; and therefore every man should feel that far from being entitled to glory before God, he is under His righteous condemnation, and cannot hope to escape therefrom by any, even the most strenuous efforts of his own.

Is there, then, nothing for man but despair, as regards what is of highest concernment to him, his relation to God and his destiny as a spiritual being? Is salvation—not in the mean and narrow sense given to the word in common speech and popular theology, as escape from a future of pain into one of pleasure—but is salvation in the grand and broad sense given to the word in Scripture—is salvation as inclusive of enlightenment of mind and purification of heart, of deliverance from the power of sin and the condemnation of the moral law, of com-

munion with God and delight in His service—is salvation as inclusive of whatever is required by man to realise his true destination as a spiritual being, hopelessly unattainable? If it be so, man is altogether vanity, and it would be better for him not to be. But it is not so. This only is true that his salvation is one for which he must be indebted not to himself but to his God; it is one which he must consent to receive from God. It must come through Christ whom God has given to be a propitiation for sin, and in whom He has clearly revealed to us His own Fatherhood and glory; Christ in whom dwells the riches of grace, the fulness of Godhead, and the perfection of manhood; Christ who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is a salvation in order to receive which a man must cease to glory in himself, must cease to glory in man, in the power or the wisdom or the goodness of man, and learn to glory in God alone. As saith Jeremiah (ix. 23–24), “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord who exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.”

It was because St Paul felt that man could only reasonably glory in God as He had revealed Himself through Jesus Christ—that there was no other name than that of Christ given under heaven by which men could be saved, while in Him there was every element of a true and complete salvation—it was for this most sufficient reason that he determined “not to know anything among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.” In himself he did not claim to be wiser than the philosophers of Greece—of itself he did not suppose that his preaching had more power than the eloquence of the orators of Greece—his confidence was not in himself or in anything of his own, but in God and what God had given him to proclaim; he felt that God’s message was superior to any human speculation; he had faith in the power of the cross; he was convinced that Christ taken into any human life would carry into it a wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, which would be its

perfectly adequate and efficacious salvation, and that nothing else would; and so he gloried in God alone, and kept closely to the preaching of Christ.

There were people who thought he might profitably have imitated admired philosophers and popular orators; that he should have had a wider range of subjects and used more enticing words. Those foolish Corinthians have many successors among ourselves, who fancy that the pulpit would gain greatly in power if ministers would only discourse more about science and philosophy, nature and history, political and social reform, and the various so-called questions of the day. But surely for six days in the week we have quite enough of all that, and surely there is something more important even than all that. The power of the pulpit will most certainly not be increased by ministers forsaking their own glorious work, the direct preaching of Christ, for the lecturing on lower themes, or for the work of politicians, or journalists, who are still more plentiful among us than were philosophers or orators in Greece. The power of the pulpit lies in preaching Christ, and will be strong or feeble according as He is faithfully and zealously or faithlessly and coldly preached.

God has given us in Christ, St Paul tells us, satisfaction for all the wants of our natures. If a man be in Christ, Christ will be everything to him. He will supply every great want of his life, everything which the Divine Law demands should be in his life. He will be "made unto us," as our text says, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." What more can a man need than these? We may safely say that he can need nothing more which is really essential to him, and all these every man will receive who believes and abides in Christ. It is a wonderfully comprehensive truth, a wonderfully precious assurance. Time will only allow me to speak of a part of it, "Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom." May it be a word of comfort and of help to you.

"Jesus Christ, of God is made unto us wisdom." We sorely need wisdom. We are by nature foolish as to the highest concerns of our being, and this folly is a heritage of woe. Without wisdom we shall not get any other great spiritual

blessing, for we shall not even know how to seek it. But Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom—the wisdom that supplies one great want of our natures—the wisdom which is followed by the righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, which supply all the other great wants of our natures.

“The world by wisdom,” St Paul tells us, “knew not God.” As a matter of historical fact, reason, unaided by a special revelation, failed to acquire the knowledge of God which man stood in need of as a moral and religious being. St Paul had in view, of course, chiefly what the Greek and Roman intellect had accomplished in this direction, and clearly he was right in thinking that it had signally failed. The wisdom of the ancient world at its very best fell far short of a knowledge of God capable of purifying the heart, controlling the passions, stimulating moral ambition, creating a spiritual dread of sin, strengthening the feeling of personal responsibility, and consoling or fortifying the sufferer under present pain or in the prospect of death. The popular religion was strangely childish and mean, and in many respects most sensual and immoral. The worshippers of Jupiter and Juno, of Mars and Venus, and the gods and goddesses who were supposed to be their companions, must have been very often not the better but the worse for worshipping such beings. Certainly they could find no elevating ideal or correct and consistent rule of moral life among the capricious and unrighteous and impure objects of their adoration. It was not from the popular religion, the idolatrous polytheism of Greece and Rome, that the human soul in those lands drew spiritual inspiration, but from philosophy, from reason, apprehending those truths of natural religion which the positive religion disfigured and contradicted. If salvation be deliverance from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from love of the world to love of God, no sane man will say that the Greek or Roman religion was the way to it or an indication of the way to it.

There were a few great men, earnest searchers after wisdom, who rose above the popular religion, got wonderful glimpses of many Divine truths, and gave to the world noble moral instructions which are of inestimable value even to this day. There is no need to depreciate those men or anything which

they did. But they all failed to turn men from the worship of idols to the service of the true God ; they saw too clearly to be able to believe that the popular religion was true but not clearly enough to know what to put in its place ; they found out many *truths* but not *the truth* ; they did not show to the soul a fountain of cleansing, healing, and life.

But it may be imagined that the wisdom of the world has greatly increased since the time of St Paul, and that as our men of science know far more of nature and history than the ablest and most learned of his contemporaries they may succeed where ancient thinkers failed, and attain to what will be in every respect an adequate wisdom, thoroughly satisfying at once the claims of the intellect and the yearnings of the heart, quickening and guiding the conscience, and subduing, and purifying, and elevating the life. But this is by no means the case. The experience of the centuries which have since elapsed has only made it increasingly manifest that the world by its own wisdom cannot know God or find the way of salvation. When the ablest men of our own day unhappily resolve to reject the revelation of Divine Wisdom in Jesus Christ, and to oppose to it a wisdom of their own, do we find this wisdom of theirs to be any truer or better than that of the Greek or Roman sages? No. On the contrary, it is often not even so true or so good. The wisdom which opposes itself to God's wisdom always confounds and condemns itself. Even in our own day this wisdom, when it turns away from a God and Father revealed and reconciled through Jesus Christ, can only point instead to matter and motion—or the Universe—or humanity—or the Unknowable—and fails to tell us whether the sighing of our spirit for life eternal is not an insane delusion ; whether facts move towards any goal of moral glory ; whether aught is right but what is strong ; whether love be not imbecility ; whether all men are not made in vain. Self-contradiction and confusion, pretentious feebleness and glaring foolishness, these are the results of the efforts of the human intellect to create out of the conclusions of the most advanced science a substitute for the wisdom offered us in the Gospel. It is now, therefore, more evident than even in St Paul's day that all such efforts are hopeless.

The light of nature and the works of creation and providence cannot show man a way of reconciliation and communion with God. No man by mere human wisdom, by any searching into the secrets of nature or providence, can find it out. Mere human wisdom is utter folly here, and if man may be wise at all in this connection he must confess his natural folly, the powerlessness of his own reason, and consent to be guided by the wisdom of God; or, in other words, to accept Christ who is the wisdom of God to us for salvation, who is God's solution of the problem of our salvation. The only real wisdom possible to man must from the very nature and necessity of the case be the wisdom of renouncing his own wisdom. If he say, I will solve this momentous problem for myself, without help from any one, and especially without the aid and without the light which God has given in the Gospel, then he in his wisdom is a most manifest fool whose folly will ruin him; but if he have the candour to confess his own folly, to admit that his own intellect is powerless here, and to acknowledge the wisdom of God and acquiesce in His plan of salvation, then, in the very act of confessing himself foolish he is made wise, for Christ is made wisdom unto him. It is a hard thing, undoubtedly, to be brought to confess ourselves in the way I am speaking of fools, but there is a glorious reward attached to this exercise of humility, since it makes us, in a true and strict sense, partakers of an infinite wisdom. Christ is henceforth within us, and unto us wisdom.

Many of you may have heard this story about Socrates, one of the greatest and best men among the Greeks. The oracle at Delphi pronounced him the wisest of men. Socrates could not understand it, and yet he was unwilling to disbelieve the oracle, so he went about from one person reputed wise to another, in order to be able to say, "Here is a wiser man than I am," or, at least, to find out what the oracle meant. He went to many, but he found that while they in reality knew almost nothing that was worth knowing, they thought they knew a great deal, and were very angry with one who tried to convince them of their ignorance. So that at last he came to recognise that there was a truth in what had been said about him. To use nearly his own words, "he left them, saying to



himself, 'I am wiser than these men ; for neither they nor I, it would seem, know anything valuable ; but they, not knowing, fancy that they do know ; I, as I really do not know, so I do not think that I know ; I seem therefore to be in one small matter wiser than they.'"

This quite illustrates what I mean. It is the kind of spirit which, in its degree, and about less important questions, was in the strange man Socrates ; it is precisely this kind of spirit about the things which concern our highest well-being that makes a man wise in the Christian sense. The most ignorant person, provided he only know that he must renounce his own wisdom, as, what on subjects pertaining to salvation it really is, foolishness, and accept what is disclosed in Christ as to salvation, is infinitely wiser than the most able or learned man who trusts solely to his own wisdom, apart from Christ's revealed work and will. Both of them are foolish and ignorant, but the one knows it, and, in consequence of knowing it, accepts the salvation which is in Christ, and is made a partaker of infinite wisdom ; the other does not know it, and thinking that he is wise while he is a fool, wanders ruinously astray.

If, my friends, we would thus yield ourselves up to Christ, and would do so, not at one time nor by one act only, but would do so day by day, and in all respects, allowing ourselves to be guided by Him habitually, and in all things, we should not fail to learn by experience that as he who loses his life for Christ finds it, so he who surrenders to Him his reason receives it, enlightened with the only true light, filled with the only true wisdom. The self-surrender of the reason to God is the loss only of what is false in itself, while it is the gain of what is truth in God, in Christ, and in itself. It is wholly different from self-surrender to any finite or imperfect reason, or to a blind self-surrender of any kind. The wisdom of God offered us in Christ is the pure spiritual truth, the perfect wisdom, which is the very light and life of reason. Christ received as our wisdom is alone capable of making us truly wise, and if we receive Him will not fail to do so, working in us the same mind of truthfulness, reasonableness, and wisdom which was in Himself. Oh ! that we may receive Him with rejoicing hearts, and sincere self-surrender of ourselves to His guidance ; that

we may be emptied of all conceit of a wisdom which is imaginary and delusive, in order that we may be filled with the wisdom which is real and efficacious; that we may so deny ourselves as to gain ourselves; that we may be so impoverished as to be for ever enriched. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

## XX.

### CHRIST MADE UNTO US RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 CoR. i. 30.

**M**Y friends, many of you have this day sat at a communion table, and many of you, it is to be hoped, have there enjoyed true communion with Christ Jesus. If so, the best wish I can form for you—and the most appropriate and useful advice I can give you—is that you seek to maintain that communion unbroken; that you seek to abide in Christ and to have Christ ever abiding in you. There is no other good, no other blessing, so great as that either on earth or in heaven. It is the pearl of great price for the sake of which every wise merchant will not hesitate to sacrifice all else. Christ is Christianity, and only those who are in Christ are Christians. But if a man be in Christ, Christ will be everything to him; in the very act of receiving Christ he will receive whatever he requires. There is no essential want of the human soul the supply of which is not to be found in Christ; no demand of the Divine Law, which will not be met through Him; no requirement of the Christian life which He Himself does not afford the means of fulfilling.

Such is the great, encouraging, and comforting truth which the text sets before us. “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—what more than these can a man need either for time or eternity? We may safely say that he can absolutely need nothing more, and all these every man will receive who believes and abides in Christ. If, then, my friends, any of you thinking of the Christian professions which you have this day made, and feeling at the same time your own weakness and unworthiness, are asking anxiously, How may I live as I wish and have

vowed to do?—how may I honour God, follow Christ, love and help my brethren of mankind as a true disciple of Jesus must?—how is what I have been doing this day to be made not a sin and a shame to me, but the blessing and honour it must have been meant to be? I would refer you to my text as a full and glorious answer warranting you to rise above all doubts and fears, and to go forward with good hope and courage.

So long as you look merely at yourselves, at your duties, at your own poor resources and unaided powers, you may well despair, and indeed cannot reasonably do otherwise than despair, but when you look to Christ as set forth in the text—when you look to Christ as you are invited and encouraged in God's Word to do—then despair is seen to be foolish and wrong, then a bright and joyous prospect opens up to you, for in Christ you are offered all that you truly need or can reasonably seek. Do you feel your lack of wisdom—your blindness of mind and perversity of judgment as to spiritual things, as to duty and religion? Well, it is true that you lack wisdom, and certainly you will never of yourselves make yourselves wise; but turn to Christ so that His light may shine on your darkness; let the mind which was in Him be in you; accept and follow His offered guidance; and He will be made wisdom unto you, and you will become divinely reasonable in your mind and conduct; you will be children of the light walking in the light. Do you feel your lack of righteousness—that your heart is far from being affected towards God and towards His law as it ought to be—that the relation in which you stand to God, and consequently to all the manifestations and creatures of God, is to a large extent a wrong one, a deplorable one, implying a load of guilt, entailing a heritage of woe? The feeling is only too well founded; and by no efforts or works of your own can you put yourselves right with God, so as to realise that His love abides in you and your love rests on Him, your guilt being forgiven, and your hearts being renewed. But if you will only practically recognise your moral perversity, your spiritual poverty, your inherent weakness and helplessness as regards justification in God's sight, by laying aside all trust in your own performances and merits, and turning in humble faith to

Christ as offered to you in the Gospel, you will become partakers of His righteousness, and He will be made righteousness unto you, a thoroughly real and a perfectly satisfying righteousness, which both the Divine Word and your own consciousness will tell you is accepted and approved of God.

Do you feel your lack of holiness—that your dispositions are largely selfish, your motives impure, your conduct ignoble? Every one of us has great reason to feel thus, and this want also Christ alone can satisfy. The Christian grows in holiness only by looking steadily at Christ, by making Christ's character increasingly his own, and so manifesting Christ as it were in all the relations of life. An act is good only when it is what Christ would have done if placed in the same circumstances as we are in when doing it, and when our motives to its performance are what His would have been. Only in so far as Christ is taken into the soul, and His principles made ours, and His virtues established in us and shining out in what we do, are our lives sanctified lives. Every feature of true holiness in the believer is one which must have been transferred from Christ to himself—which must have been made his through the Holy Spirit imitating in him the beauties of Christ. The life of Christ in the believer is what sanctifies his life, is the source and substance of his spiritual life, so that there is goodness and holiness in the believer only in the measure in which Christ is made goodness and holiness—in which Christ is made sanctification—unto him.

Do you think of the powers within and around you, hostile and dangerous to your faith and virtue, to the peace of your souls, to your eternal welfare? Do you tremble because of the deceitfulness and perversity of your hearts, the lusts of the flesh, the temptations of the world, the snares of Satan? Well, assuredly these are no weak foes; they are all much stronger than you; but, God be thanked, they are also all much weaker than Christ, and Christ is set forth as one who is made of God unto you redemption. Christ has done battle with your enemies and conquered them for you; He is still fighting and conquering for you. The decisive victory was won on Calvary, and now if you will but put your trust in Him who suffered and bled there, and serve under Him, you will find that

numerous and powerful as your foes may be, they are really a defeated and flying army, followed by One who has everywhere shown Himself to be irresistible—to have the might as well as the right to rule the world. The victory has been won, and although the conquest is not completed it is going on; yes, even when you feel it not it is going on, and within a little time it will be perfected, and you will see all the host of your enemies who pursued you vanquished and dead as Israel saw the Egyptians lie dead upon the shore of the Red Sea, and you will be able to sing as they, “The Lord hath triumphed gloriously.” There is no foe without or within you whom you need despair of being able through Christ to meet. Neither earth nor the gates of hell can prevail against you so long as through reliance on His redeeming work you are in the strong tower, which His name, His mercy, and protection afford you. As the weakest persons, as old men and feeble women and young children, who could do nothing of themselves to resist or repel an enemy, may be in a place so fortified as to be perfectly safe, so is the feeblest of you who is in Christ, whose life rests on the sure foundation of His sacrifice unto death, beyond the reach of harm from any enemy, Christ being made of God unto you redemption.

If then, my friends, you will only receive and act on the truth contained in the text you need not be dismayed even when you think of the requirements implied in the avowal of allegiance to Christ. The professions of faith which you have this day made at the table of the Lord need not be false nor need they become false. The faith which makes Christ yours can keep Christ yours, and with Christ as yours, the text is an assurance, that you will be found true and faithful disciples, neither deluded yourselves nor deceiving others—as Satan is ready to suggest to you, endeavouring to pervert your consciences, and rob you of your comfort of mind, and cast you down from your hopes in Christ Jesus—in no sense that, but true and faithful men and women, sharing in a wisdom, a righteousness, a sanctification, a redemption, infinite and without a fault.

The truth in the text is, however, much too comprehensive for me to treat of it to-night as a whole. I shall, therefore, in

what remains to be said consider only one portion of its precious contents. Not long ago, in a neighbouring church, from this same text I tried to show how Christ Jesus is of God made unto us *wisdom*. Here and now I would desire to speak of how He is made unto us *righteousness*. May God grant His blessing on what is said.

“Christ Jesus is of God made unto us righteousness.” Man is a fallen creature; he has lost original righteousness; he is by nature unrighteous: he is alienated from the author of his being; he is disobedient to the higher laws of his being. In the latter part of last century and the earlier part of the present century rationalists and sceptics were wont to denounce the scriptural doctrine of man’s natural depravity, and to descant on the innocent savage and the native goodness of humanity. In the present day we hear no talk of the kind from those who have any pretensions to thoughtfulness or education; anthropology, the development theory, acquaintance with the laws of heredity, have swept the nonsense away; and now the doctrine of original sin is generally recognised to be in complete accordance with the findings even of science; to be a doctrine which must in substance be accepted, and which is only likely to be denied when the fact which it denotes is exaggerated, or magnified beyond what Scripture warrants.

Man’s nature may have many amiable qualities, but it has a central fault which corrupts it as a whole, which taints every affection and action, however much good may remain. The current of man’s will does not naturally run in the channel of God’s will, but in a contrary channel, one of forgetfulness towards God, of worldliness, of selfishness, of sinfulness. Thus “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” Thus “the carnal heart is enmity against God,” and is “alienated from the life of God.” Hence the soul when it follows merely its own will and inclination cannot have communion or peace with God, but is in an utterly wrong relation to God, of which it cannot be clearly conscious without great misery, shame, and fear. It, of course, cannot wish to realise its separation and alienation from God by reason of its sinfulness of nature and conduct, and, in fact, seeks by many poor shifts and artifices to delude itself; but once it is quickened

to see itself truly, to look upon sin as it really is and feel what it means and involves, there is no more possibility of its escaping this most awful and intolerable thought that its guilt must necessarily make it the object of God's just indignation.

It cannot excuse its conduct. It cannot say it has no sin ; it feels that if it does the truth is not in it. That little sentence of St John : "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," which to the indifferent seems trivial enough, acquires to the morally awakened a terrible significance. He who has once felt the agony that trivial-looking verse can give begins to understand in some measure what the gnawing of the never-dying worm may be, and shudders at the thought of having it for ever tearing at his heart.

And man can no more atone for his conduct than he can excuse it. He cannot justify himself in any way : neither by outward rites and ceremonies nor yet by works of real righteousness and holiness. The outward rites and ceremonies even when done turn out to be of no value. The conscience cannot be appeased by them ; the reason pronounces them vain ; the heart remains unsatisfied. The works of real righteousness and holiness we have not. It is out of our power to perform them, and consequently out of our power to present them. We cannot give to God what we have not, and true holiness we have not. All that we attempt is mixed up with a great deal of evil. We need to pray that God would forgive us our prayers ; and we need to repent of our repentance itself. By the works of the law can no flesh be justified.

How, then, can we enter into a right relation to God so as to be justified by Him ? What righteousness is accessible or possible to us ? The answer of Scripture is clear, and it is in perfect harmony with the findings of reason and conscience, We can be justified only by faith ; righteous only through union with the righteous Christ. So long as a man deems himself capable of establishing in his own name and strength a right to salvation ; so long as he is under the delusion that he can so obey the law as to deserve salvation ; so long is he hopelessly under the power and curse of the law. But the moment he



comes to feel that he *has* no righteousness of his own ; that he cannot fulfil any one demand which the law makes upon him ; that do what he will the only wages due him must be the terrible wages of sin ; the moment, I say, that he feels this, and in consequence of feeling it, casts himself solely and wholly on God's mercy as revealed in Jesus Christ, that moment—by that very act—the law loses the hold which it had upon him to condemnation ; Christ's sacrifice thus accepted unloosens its grasp ; Christ's whole mediatorial work stands between him and it ; Christ's merits cover and protect him from the consequences of his own demerits. The man who, conscious of his own weakness and unworthiness, renounces all trust in himself and places his whole trust in God as justifying and saving, as giving forgiveness and grace, purity and strength, through Jesus Christ, is a man so attached, or united, to Christ, that God cannot regard him as existing out of Jesus Christ and only in his own sinful individuality ; and he cannot but rise through Christ into a new life of confidence and love towards God, of fellowship and peace with the Father of Spirits. In one word, Christ is through faith, by the gracious ordination of God, made unto him righteousness.

It is not necessary to attempt to determine how Christ's righteousness is made over to one who thus, by renouncing every pretension to a righteousness of his own, humbles himself to accept it. It may be by imputation—by a forensic act—a legal substitution. That is a theory for which very much can be said, and which is not to be lightly rejected. But it is not what is affirmed in the text. The text states a fact and gives no theory about it. It declares even that Christ is made unto us wisdom and sanctification no less than righteousness, although no one would maintain that He is made our wisdom by His wisdom, and our sanctification by His holiness, imputed to us. What is, however, of essential importance to us as sinners who need to be forgiven and received as children of God, is *the fact* expressed by the words "Christ is made of God unto us righteousness"; not *any theory or explanation of the fact*. That *fact* is the glorious one that, although a self-made righteousness is impossible to us, a perfect God-given righteousness is placed within our reach. Living faith in Christ, loving union with Christ, makes it ours.

The same faith, I must add, which makes Christ this to us at first continues to make Him the same to us ever after. Faith is not merely an act to be put forth only once. The faith which is implanted in us by the Holy Spirit is meant to become a fixed principle and to grow ever stronger, more active, more fruitful. Faith even as appropriation of the righteousness of Christ for the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God is not to be a momentary, transitory state, but a settled and abiding condition of soul.

True it may be, as divines say, that one act of faith justifies completely—that justification is not a matter of degrees—but, none the less is it true also that our *continued justification is faith*. To be one with God in Christ through faith—through a sincere self-surrendering trust which cordially accepts the will of God for our salvation as it is freely offered to us in the Gospel—is the only real righteousness to which we can hope to attain. It is one, however, quite adequate to our needs; one which sets us in a right relationship to God, frees us from the bondage of the law, and confers on us all the privileges of sonship. Its sufficiency is a most certain, most comforting, and most glorious fact. And that righteousness is inseparable from Christian faith. It is attained through faith in Christ, and can be attained no otherwise. Therefore we may well attach high value to such faith.

But let us not feel too sure that we have it. Let us not be over-confident that what we consider our faith is genuine Christian faith—the faith which the Gospel demands. It may be, on the contrary, a bare naked assent, a mere intellectual conclusion, in which affection and will have no part. We may mistake for faith in Christ what is an entirely different thing,—not the faith which accepts, receives, and rests on Christ alone, but the faith that we have that faith when we have it not. Our faith may be a delusion and snare, not the real and direct, vital and active, faith in Christ, which can alone unite us with Him and make us the habitual recipients of the redeeming grace of God.

What has been our own conscious experience as to faith? Have we always felt it to be as efficacious as we expected, or always found it to be just what we considered it to be?

Have we never, as we thought, surrendered ourselves entirely to Christ? never at any crisis in our spiritual history so earnestly put our trust in Him as to have then, and perhaps for some considerable time afterwards, felt the strength of sin so weakened in us and the power of grace so operative in us that we could greatly rejoice in God as our reconciled Father and vividly feel ourselves to be His redeemed children? If we have had no such experience there is reason to fear that we may have had no true faith; and we ought to make sure that we have it if we would be true Christians. But let me suppose, what is likely enough, that we have really had it. Then I must ask, Has it never been found that there has been a considerable amount of self-deception in our experience?—has it always remained with us?—has our confidence never gradually, or even perhaps rapidly, come to be shaken?—has our faith not sometimes or often failed, and the joy which it had brought with it vanished, and a sense of being under the dominion of sin and the condemnation of the law again laid hold of us? Comparatively few, I imagine, can affirm that it has not been so in their case. To fall away from faith and the righteousness which is of faith, and to fall into sin and alienation from God and feel one's self in consequence a slave to the law instead of God's child, is no uncommon experience.

It is, however, a very trying and painful experience,—one very apt to lead to spiritual despair. Those who are in this state are those who know that there is no righteousness unto salvation to be attained except that which is secured through faith. And yet faith as regards them appears to have failed. They can certainly no longer rest on their past faith, sufficient as they once felt it to be, for from that they have fallen away. Hence all their present trouble. But that trouble itself may well be salutary. There are precious lessons in it. It teaches the difference between faith in Christ and faith in faith; it teaches, that is to say, that what men have to trust in is not faith as mere faith, or faith as theirs, but the object of their faith, God as revealed in Christ. It teaches also that in all such cases as I have referred to what is really to blame is not faith itself, but either error or sin mixed with faith, or the falling away from faith through weakness and instability

of character. The best advice, nay the only good advice, one can give to those who have, in the way indicated, become doubtful of the efficacy of faith in Christ, is that they should cast away their doubts, start afresh with a stronger and more earnest faith, renounce all vain confidence in themselves, and turn to Christ with a more entire and exclusive trust.

The only remedy which can avail them is that which St John has so clearly prescribed, when he says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Mark you, it is not, "If any man have sinned before he became a Christian;" it is "if any man sin"; if he sin now; if he sin after having professed faith in Christ and while a member of the Church of Christ; then the remedy is still faith. It is not for "any particular class or classes of men"; it is for "any man"; for all men—Christian or non-Christian. It is the propitiation for the sins of the whole Church and of the whole world; for those who receive and for those who reject it. Faith is the only means of receiving it. And since our sins are so many that we are in constant need of receiving it there is a constant call on us for faith,—the faith which renounces sin, secures forgiveness, and can alone bring peace to the troubled conscience.

Continued faith so as to be always present faith is, I remark in conclusion, the only faith which can give us a true sense of our justification in virtue of acceptance of the righteousness of Christ. It is only perseverance in faith which warrants a man to believe that he ever had true faith. It is said that Cromwell on his death-bed found repose in the thought that he once, long before, had been the subject of Divine grace. I do not know that the story is true, and indeed believe it to be more than doubtful; but what is certain is that despair itself is to be preferred to comfort resting on so treacherous a foundation. Better pass into the eternal world, like the good and pious poet Cowper, with the dark and horrible conviction that he had been by an eternal decree doomed to perdition, than pass into it satisfied with so fatally delusive a reason as that you must be saved because you once had faith. The first glimpse of eternity would

show poor Cowper how needlessly he had been distrusting God's mercy and tormenting himself. The first glimpse of eternity will show also the folly of ever having found any satisfaction in the remembrance of a faith which had been lost.

The Scriptures teach both faith and perseverance in faith, but they never teach us to say, "I have believed, therefore I shall persevere"; on the contrary they teach us to say, "I have persevered, therefore I have believed." They do not teach us, that is to say, to argue from faith to perseverance, but from perseverance to faith. They do not make faith a proof of the certainty of perseverance, but perseverance the proof of the genuineness of faith. Abide in faith then—abide in Christ then—if ye would know in any measure the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. Christ is made of God unto us righteousness, a complete and continuing and ever-present righteousness, but only through a constantly active faith. An abiding faith can alone secure you abiding communion with God in Christ, the abiding peace of forgiven hearts, and that abiding love to God which is the source of holy lives. May God add His blessing to what has been said. Amen.

## XXI.

### CHRIST MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION.

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 COR. i. 30.

I HAVE already spoken from this pulpit on the words, “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom*”; and also on the words, “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *righteousness*”; and now, not inappropriately I trust, at the close of the sacred services in which you have this day been engaged, I would direct your minds for a little to the great and blessed truth expressed in the words, “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us sanctification.”

If you have truly come unto Christ you will assuredly seek to abide in Him; and to have learned the supreme importance of this—the supreme importance of continuous spiritual communion with God in Christ—is to have learned the central and most valuable secret of life, even what true life is, and whence to obtain it, alike for the common needs of every hour and for the highest needs of eternity. Our intellects are by nature spiritually dark and erring, and can only find light and guidance in Christ whom God has set forth unto us as wisdom. Our consciences testify of a broken law, of a wrong relationship to God and all God’s creatures, of a thick cloud of unforgiven sin hiding the light of Divine favour, of an ever increasing load of guilt pressing the soul down into despair; and the only sure ground which we can have that law has been vindicated, the wrong relationship righted, the cloud dispelled, the load unloosed, and that pardon and peace have simply to be accepted, is the work and sacrifice of Him whom God has given to be our righteousness. Our flesh is weak and lustful, our hearts impure, our desires corrupt, our wills perverse, and we cannot of ourselves free ourselves from the evil that is within us, from the body of death which we

carry about with us, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world, as we are bound to do; yet are we by no means left helpless and hopeless, for God has sent us Christ and Christ has sent us the Spirit, and Christ formed in us through the Spirit, is just the holiness demanded of us. From ignorance, folly, and error Christ our wisdom—from guilt, restlessness, and despair Christ our righteousness—from selfishness, lust, pride, worldliness, and all the powers and forms of sin Christ our sanctification—from these and whatever other evils there may be than these, Christ our redemption has been given of God to deliver us—for in Him there is a complete redemption, an absolute salvation. In Him we have all we need; all the treasures of God's grace and goodness; the true and full satisfaction of every want.

Sanctification is closely connected both with wisdom and righteousness. To accept Christ as one of these we must accept Him as all of them. What we have to receive is a whole Christ, not a divided Christ. We cannot, for example, take Christ as our wisdom, the light of our minds, without taking Him at the same time, and in the same measure, as our sanctification, for the light to be found in Him is essentially pure and purifying, the wisdom due to His indwelling and inworking in us is a direct and powerful means of producing holiness of life. Yea, what is Christian wisdom, but, on the one hand, a condition of holiness, the practical knowledge which enables us to avoid what is unholy and to desire and do what is holy; and, on the other hand, a part of holiness, holiness in the understanding and reason? If you would find holiness in Christ, neglect not, then, to seek in Him also wisdom, right-mindedness, seriousness and sobriety of judgment, power to discern all that regards your moral and spiritual life in the Divine light of the truth as it is in Christ.

In like manner, pardon and holiness, justification and sanctification, are inseparable. It is, at the most, only in idea that we can say the one must go before the other; in reality, they spring at once from the same root or source. The same faith which obtains for us pardon produces the only genuine holiness. Christ presents Himself to us whenever He comes to

us as alike our justification and our sanctification. We do not need to wait until we have a certain measure of holiness before we may, without presumption, expect the forgiveness of our sins. Presumption lies all the other way. It is the daring to think of worthiness at all in connection with any measure of personal holiness, instead of trusting solely to Christ's finished work. Unless we consent to seek for God's mercy and grace in the name of Christ and not in the name of works of our own, we can never take one single onward step in the path of holiness. On the other hand, we do not need to wait for a sense of pardon, for some assurance of justification, in Christ, before we turn to Him for holiness, for sanctification. We can have no desire for the pardon of our sins, as distinct from a mere selfish wish of deliverance from their painful consequences, unless we have some sense of the hatefulness of sin, of unholiness, and some desire for holiness, a desire which is itself a commencement, however feeble, of a spiritual or holy life, a seed of grace in which there already lie all the promises and possibilities of complete sanctification. The faith which alone seeks and can alone receive justification, the forgiveness of sins, is a moral faith, a faith in which there is involved sorrow for sin, hatred of sin, desire to be free from sin, a longing for holiness, a stretching and straining after holiness.

Justification and sanctification ought not to be confounded, but neither ought they to be so sharply separated as they often are. Some speak as if the former were completed before the latter is begun. Surely they overlook that Christian men so long as they sin, so long as they are not completely holy, and consequently so long as they are on earth, must constantly need to be anew forgiven, justified afresh. The first manifestation of the spirit of regeneration in a man is turning to God in Christ through faith for both pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, and in the last hour of his earthly life every Christian must still feel these two great blessings equally necessary to him. The author of a popular religious book, entitled, "The Higher Christian Life," has only exaggerated a common error, when he maintains that men receive Christ first as their justification, and then afterwards



—sometimes shortly after, sometimes years after—they receive Him as their sanctification, which last receiving of Him is a kind of *new conversion* and the introduction to a “higher Christian life.” The whole conception on which this hypothesis rests is false. Christ is not thus divided or divisible. The soul must choose Him and cleave to Him in His unity or not at all. It must so receive Him from first to last, from hour to hour, from day to day, from year to year, throughout its whole Christian life on earth. There can be no accepting of Christ at all unless we accept Him as one whom we desire to work in us all His blessed will and good pleasure. We cannot have our sins forgiven through Him unless we seek to have also the power of them destroyed in us through Him. We must take Him as our King or we cannot have Him as our Priest. He cannot be received as a propitiation by those who would reject Him as sanctification.

That we must find our sanctification in Christ Himself is as obvious as that we must find in Him our wisdom and righteousness. It is obvious from the very nature of the thing. For what is sanctification but a putting off of the old or carnal man and a putting on of the new or spiritual man, but a putting off of self and a putting on of Christ? That is what has to be accomplished in a holy life, and all work which does not fill us more and more with the spirit and clothe us more and more with the holy beauties of Christ is, so far as sanctification is concerned, labour lost.

In giving expression to this truth there is more danger of under than of over-statement. At least we are not to suppose that the appropriation of the character and graces of Christ which constitutes holiness is a mere outward imitation and not a real appropriation. The life of the believer is one which is hid with Christ in God, and Christ truly lives in the believer. Our Christ is not one who merely suffered and died, rose again and lives, for us, but one who lives in us, so that we derive all our spiritual life from His life even as the branch derives its life from the tree to which it is united. We can no more live of ourselves, we can no more think, feel, speak or do what is spiritually good of ourselves, than the branch can live of itself, can bud, blossom, or bear fruit of itself. Whenever we

try to work as of ourselves our work has no efficacy or blessing in it. It is only effort wasted, strength thrown away. Without Christ we can do nothing. His life in ours is what sanctifies our life, is the source and substance of our spiritual life.

Our sanctification, then, depends on our communion with Christ. It is only to be carried on through that being kept up; its continuity, progress, and completeness must depend on the constancy, the growth, and the thoroughness of the communion between the soul and its Saviour.

Now, this communion is necessarily a twofold process, a mutual and reciprocal intercourse, a living of the soul in Christ and a living of Christ in the soul. The soul that would grow in holiness must seek to live in Christ. It must be its constant desire and aim through faith, love, hope—through pious meditation on what great things God has in Christ done for it—through contemplation of the perfect character and example of Christ—through effort to imitate the one and follow the other—through prayer—through intercourse with the pious—through the devout perusal of Scripture—through the ordinances and services of the Church—through all the multitudinous means of grace and of increased acquaintance with Christ which God bestows—the soul, I say, in pursuit of holiness must endeavour thus to be ever with the Lord, abiding with Him, conversing with Him, learning from Him, sharing in His life.

But this is not all. The believer must not only seek thus to live in Christ; but must also seek to have Christ living in him, working in him, transforming his whole character, determining his whole conduct, purifying, exalting, and beautifying his whole mind, heart, and life. For this, and nothing short of this, is the promise, and nothing short of this can satisfy or suffice. A God and Saviour to whom we can go and speak, into whose presence we can enter, on whose name we may call, whom we are permitted to follow and commanded to obey, is by no means a God and Saviour completely adequate to our wants; we need a God and Saviour who will also come to us and speak to us, who will be nearer us than any creature can be, who will take hold of us, live, rule, and

work in us, giving us a power and a wisdom and a virtue not our own.

Such is the twofold task, the double problem, of sanctification. And thanks be to God it is not a hopeless task, an insoluble problem. What is impossible with man is possible with God, and God has made possible for us in this great matter of sanctification all that He demands of us. He has made a revelation of Himself which is a completely adequate agency and surety of our sanctification. He has not only shown us His Fatherhood with its infinite love and mercy, and His Sonship with its atoning sacrifice and perfect example, but He has also revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit, who dwelleth and worketh in us unto sanctification and eternal life. Eighteen hundred years of thought and experience have not yet fully taught the Christian Church how great and glorious a truth it is that God is not only the Father and the Son but also the Spirit. Great as was the advance of the revelation of God in the incarnation and atonement of Christ over the revelation in creation and ordinary providence, it was yet imperfect, it was merely external, it still left God without us. But God has not thus left the revelation of His name incomplete; He has disclosed Himself as the Spirit, present to and in our spirits, imparting to them from within the light and love, the power and grace they need. It is this which makes Christianity, speculatively considered, the absolute revelation of Godhead; and it is this also which makes it, practically considered, a perfect salvation.

God as the Holy Spirit undertakes to work in us the will of God the Father and to conform us to the image of God the Son; to enable us to live in Christ and to bring Christ to live in us; to sanctify us in body and soul, heart and conduct. The law is spiritual, and we are carnal, but He, the Spirit, is both able and willing to make the spiritual in us triumph; Christ's example is one of perfect sanctity, and we are most imperfect and sinful, but the Spirit is perfectly holy, and if within us, will not cease to work within us until He has wholly transformed us into the likeness of our Lord. Let us yield ourselves, therefore, in faith and with good hope to His power; let us not grieve the Spirit; let us seek in His

strength to depart from all iniquity, to be holy in all manner of conversation ; to press on after perfection.

Yes, *after perfection*. That is the goal at which we should aim. St Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians—"that they might be *sanctified wholly, preserved blameless in their whole spirit and soul and body*"—is one which every Christian man and woman should habitually offer up on their own behalf. Sin has vitiated every part of our nature. We need to be sanctified in every part thereof. The mind with its faculties, the heart with its affections, the will with its energies and resolutions, the conscience with its motives and dictates, the body with its corporeal motions and animal appetites, have all been tainted and corrupted, and all require to be purified and renewed until there remain in them nothing contrary to God's law, nothing offensive to God's holiness.

That goal may be on earth always largely an object merely of aspiration. Let it be to us, however, what it ought to be, an object of sincere aspiration, of earnest endeavour after attainment. Let us see to it that the general course of our lives be always moving towards it—moving in the only right direction. The native and proper tendency of sanctification is to advance. The Christian who is retrograding is a man who is in a most dangerous condition,—a man who is falling away from grace.

Let us press then steadily onwards towards the mark of the prize of our high calling in Jesus Christ. The way is difficult ; it may be long and toilsome ; we may meet with many disappointments on it ; we may often stumble and fall ; but if we obey and trust our God, a gracious Father, a loving Saviour, a sanctifying Spirit, we assuredly shall not fail to reach our goal, the mark of the prize of our high calling. May God grant that we all reach it. May the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. And to His name be glory for ever. Amen.

## XXII.

### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY—MAN'S EVIL EYE.<sup>1</sup>

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”—MATTHEW xx. 15.

THIS verse is part of a parable which is in some respects difficult of interpretation, but which had clearly enough the general design of rebuking a vice which has in all ages, countries, and classes of society been very common,—the vice of murmuring at God's goodness towards others as if it were injustice towards ourselves. Hence obviously very much of the meaning of the parable comes out, finds expression, in the text; and although the parable be hard to understand as a whole, nothing can be plainer than the teaching of the verse which is the text. It brings before us two subjects,—the sovereignty of God and the envy of the human heart,—and indicates that the latter of these is the cause, or at any rate a cause, of the former being questioned, and murmured against, and evil spoken of. These are the things, then, on which we would meditate for a short time, seeking God's blessing so that our meditations may be profitable to mind and heart and bear good fruit in our lives.

The text teaches us the sovereignty of God. The householder in the parable for whom it is lawful to do what he will with his own plainly represents Almighty God. He the Creator of all things,—He the possessor of all things in a far fuller sense than any man is the possessor of anything,—He has a right to do what He will with His own. It is not for man to challenge what God does with His own. Men are very jealous about their rights to what they call their own; will not readily suffer the meddling of others with what they claim to be their property; are prone to push their titles to possession to the

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the Churches of Craiglockhart and of Crathie.

utmost limits human law will allow and far beyond those which Divine Justice prescribes; and this although these rights and titles rest often on the poorest, sandiest foundations, being such as cannot be traced far until you come to mere brute force, or fraud, or arbitrary will. Well, surely, if men are so jealous about rights and titles of this sort; if they are so easily satisfied that this and that other thing is their own, and that therefore they may do with it what they will, none daring to blame them; if so, surely they will never presume to contest the rights of God over what there is certainly no denying to be His own,—those rights which no one can pretend to have been wrongfully taken from any one or to have ever belonged to any other,—those rights which creation and preservation give Him,—the rights of a proprietorship like unto which for legitimacy there is none other in the universe. But, strange to say, it is just His rights which are most contested; which are constantly being contested; which all of us are slow of heart to acknowledge. Our own right to do what we will with what we fancy to be our own, although perhaps not at all our own, and seldom indeed if ever entirely our own, we question not nor suffer others to question; but God's right to do what He will with His own, with what is indubitably, entirely, exclusively His own,—God's sovereignty,—that we not only often question but often, it is to be feared, censure and deny. This is one of the many strange and revolting contradictions which we find within us, and which will be in us, so long as we have the evil eye,—will be in us until the evil eye is plucked out, and an eye not evil, not double and contradictory but single and making the whole body full of light, is given us instead.

Let us, however, see a little more closely what this sovereignty, this right to do as He wills with His own, which God here claims, really is. Now, it is clearly a sovereignty, a right, which in a certain sense is not absolute, not unconditioned. There is a sort of sovereignty which some have sought to ascribe to God but which He in His Word often disclaims. A sovereignty over holiness and truth themselves to choose or reject them, a right to disregard or set aside right, a sovereignty of this kind inconsistent with moral perfection, a right of this kind contradicting all our highest and worthiest thoughts about what is

right, God nowhere asks us to believe in. Nay, He not only nowhere asks us to ascribe to Him such a sovereignty, but wherever He strongly claims for Himself that sovereignty of action which is His due, He is, as it were, careful to guard us against confusing it with the other and thereby forming a false and degrading conception of His character. It is so in the present instance. Are we not carefully instructed that every labourer got his own, got all he was entitled to, that no man was wronged, was unjustly dealt with,—that the reason why some murmured was not that they got less than they were entitled to look for but that others got more, were more bountifully dealt with? The householder in claiming a right to do as he wills with his own claims no right to disregard or violate justice but a right conditioned by justice, a right which justice gives him, a right against which the sense of justice has not a word to say, a right which only the evil eye, the envious heart, finds painful. The sovereignty, then, which we find God demanding us to recognise is one consistent with justice.

It is also, I would further remark, one which reason as reason has nothing to say against. The general fact that a certain sovereignty of action belongs unto God, that He is free, that He is under constraint to no one, that He may do as He will with His own, this general fact certainly accords with reason; nay, reason vouches for the truth of it. If reason prove, as surely reason does, that there is a God, it is that there is a God thus sovereign, independent, and free. A God not so would be no true God. The poorest, feeblest creature who from a feeling of love could *freely* give a cup of cold water to a suffering fellow-creature would be superior to a God who, although eternal and infinite in His attributes, had no freedom. So noble a thing is freedom. And hence the reason which testifies of God that He is infinitely above us in all things else testifies that He is infinitely above us as to freedom also. Then, as to the results of this freedom, the individual instances in which this sovereignty is manifested, it is true that human reason often cannot account for them, cannot show why they are so and not otherwise, but they are not contrary to it in any way; it is never forced to conclude that they ought to have been otherwise than they are. Why God causes one man to be born rich and

another poor, why He here pulls down and there raises up, at one moment sends prosperity and at another adversity, our reasons may very likely fail to tell us; but do they ever tell us that any of these things God should not do, or even that for any of these things He has not many and good reasons, although we do not perceive them? It is not from our reasons that objections to God's sovereignty come but from our feelings,—sometimes from natural feelings, such as dislike of suffering, and at other times from feelings which dishonour our nature, such as envying and grieving at the good of others.

It is especially necessary to bear this in mind, that God's sovereignty rightly apprehended is never contrary to reason, although it often is contrary to excessive and perverted feeling, because it is not uncommon to use the doctrine of God's sovereignty in order to put down the reason, to silence it. That is a thoroughly unscriptural use of the doctrine. In all the passages where it is dwelt upon—in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah, the ninth chapter of the Romans, and this parable of the householder—you will find that it is just by appealing to the reason that God vindicates His claims to sovereignty. He puts down in favour of the truth of His sovereignty the murmurings of perverse affections by appeals to the reason, but the questionings of reason, and still more, of course, of the moral sense, He never puts down, and those who would do so for Him are but unskilful advocates of His cause. There are a great many people who are afraid lest reason go too far into the study of God's ways, and who think and speak of it as a sin to question very closely the indications we have of His character and dispensations. Well, truly, if a sin, it is one few are guilty of. I do not see it anywhere; but a dull, stupid, blind indifference to God's ways and workings, that I see everywhere. And it is to be feared that there has been a mistake, and that a virtue has come to be thought of as a sin, and a sin to be thought of as a virtue. Reason cannot go too far in the study of God's ways so long as it remains reason. The Bible nowhere says a word about its going too far. Priests have in all ages preached against that as a sin, and a blinded people has believed them, while what God has always complained of is that men would not study His character and ways closely and diligently enough.



Priests may fear that if reason goes a certain length it will find their dogmas irrational, but God has no fear that if it go to the utmost length it can, it will ever find any of His ways irrational.

Next I have to remark that this sovereignty of God is not any transcendental, invisible thing, which does not come near us or much concern us, but a thing which we may see in, over, and all around us, determining the various circumstances of our own and our neighbours' lives. It is not a thing which we are shut out from studying because we cannot obtain a knowledge of God's secret decrees or eternal purposes; the study of it only requires that we look at ordinary, every-day facts. It is not a thing that we can only read about in the Bible, but a thing in regard to which we can verify and realise what the Bible says by comparing it with what is to be seen in society or with the experience of our own souls. The way in which the householder is represented in the parable as dealing with his labourers is a way in which God is constantly dealing with men; the effect it is represented as having, the envious murmuring, the grieving and grudging of some at the good of others, is one of general and incessant recurrence; the occasions on which God may well be conceived of as saying to us, "May I not do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?" are innumerable. It may be of use to show this, as it will show that this portion of God's Word is not one of mere speculative interest, not one about something far away from us in a past eternity or the hidden depths of another world, but very near to us, yea, in our hearts and lives, and most real and practical.

Now first, then, this is a fact that God sets men in very different circumstances as to outward prosperity, as to worldly comfort, wealth, and influence. Nothing in a man himself, no intellectual or moral qualities of his, but the fact that his parents were such-and-such persons determines whether he is to begin life in the lowest or the highest ranks of society; whether he shall have perhaps to struggle constantly against starvation or be the possessor of more riches than he can make use of; whether he is to toil at manual labour and in menial service or wear gay clothing and dwell in kings' houses. This

God determines, this God does, according to the sovereignty of His own will. It is not according to merits; no man in presence of the facts of the case will so outrage common sense as seriously to maintain that. God puts this man in a low position and that in a high, causes this man to be born a beggar and that a prince, for good reasons no doubt, but not for reasons that we can discover, and certainly not because of merits. To one man He grants success, and to another, manifestly not inferior in worth or ability, He denies it; the one attaining and the other failing, because circumstances over which neither had control prospered the one and baffled the other. That there are thus many and great differences between the lots of men which are not of man's own creation but of God's sovereign willing and ordaining, are facts as certain as any in the world. But are they not apt to seem very hard, harsh facts? Do they not occasion a great deal of murmuring? Are they not very sore and offensive to many an eye? Have we not seen the envy and the jealousy to which they give rise manifested in our own day not only in murmurings but in ruthless murders, in gigantic conspiracies, in ferocious insurrections, in the most extravagant schemes and the most insane efforts to destroy all social distinctions, to level down all social inequalities, even those most manifestly of God's making and not of man's? And are not the mad rage of the Communist striving to reduce a city to ashes, and the dark hate of the Nihilist on the track of his victim, and the insane destructiveness of the dynamitard merely the intensest forms of a kind of evil passion which is universal, which everywhere sets class against class and divides neighbours from one another, which often separates even brother from brother and sister from sister, which shows its baneful presence in our hearts whenever we harbour there a bitter feeling because some one is more fortunate, more wealthy, more popular, more influential than we are, and which we all need to watch, and pray, and strive against?

It is not uncommon but very common for a man to grieve at his neighbour's good, to contrast it with his own lot, and to murmur, "What has this man ever done that he should be so much more comfortably situated, so much more bountifully dealt with, than I am?—why have I been born to all this

poverty and toil and suffering, while he, mentally and morally not better but worse than I am, has been born to ease, honour, and affluence?" Well, it is a hard question truly; a question to which no answer of the kind which the repining heart seeks can be given; a question to which the only direct answer is, God has so willed it and had a right so to will it. He had a right to do as He pleased with His own. Special kindness to one is not injustice to another. If God gives to all, as assuredly He does, as much and more than they deserve, none have a right to complain that He has been more bountiful to others than to them. Let us not delude ourselves when we feel as if God's doing good to our neighbours were doing wrong to us, with the fancy that a sense of justice is at the root of our discontent with our own condition, for the real root of it is an evil, envious eye, which it is our duty to pluck out,—for if we get rid of it we shall cease our murmuring, accept humbly and lovingly God's will to ourselves, and even rejoice that it seems still more to abound in mercy unto others.

Then here is a second fact. God does not only place men in different circumstances as to mere worldly prosperity but in different moral circumstances. The moral surroundings of men are of an infinite variety of kinds and degrees, and these are very often of God's fixing and not left to a man's own choosing. One man before his very birth, before he has done any action good or bad, God hates more than He hated Esau because He fixes his lot to be born and reared among African aborigines scarcely elevated above the brutes, or among the devotees of all that is licentious and degrading in Hinduism; while another, on the contrary, He loves more than He ever loved Jacob, since He determines his lot to be the object of the wise and tender care of Christian parents in our own highly favoured land. And even within this land itself what extremes, what differences there are! Why, there are souls, immortal souls, sent into this land which from the hour of their birth are acted on by such influences that one might almost doubt if an angel from heaven could pass through them without pollution; immortal souls which are born and cradled and drilled in crime, so that you can scarcely expect anything but crime from them. There are others who are sent into the charge of those

who surround them with a watchful prudence and tender affection, who set before them good examples, check in them the first risings of evil, and foster in them all that is gentle, and generous, and true, so that one can scarcely see how they could have been more happily placed for virtue and religion.

Thus God acts in the exercise of His sovereign will. He sends one soul among the influences most favourable, another among those most unfavourable to its moral health. But you know that this is a fact which is apt to stagger the mind very much, and that it is associated with some very dismal speculations which would confine God's love to a few and consign the rest of mankind to a hopeless looking for of judgment. I believe these speculations are as ill founded as they are painful, and of this I am sure, that if any man say that God's hate to Esau, to a Hindu, to those born of profligate parents, is incompatible with the most tender and fatherly love to them,—that if any man say that God wishes the hurt or sin or death of any one and that His putting them in unfavourable circumstances is evidence of this,—he calumniates the character of God. God bears the truest love to all, and has the best of reasons for how He acts towards all, and can make the crooked straight and enable the last to be first, and has often done so. Hence in all ages many have been coming out of heathen lands to sit on the thrones of heaven which the children of the kingdom might have been expected to occupy, but did not; in all ages publicans and sinners have been passing in where scribes and Pharisees have been shut out.

Now, how has God shown His sovereignty towards us in this respect, and how ought we to feel towards it? Plainly all of us here are by the ordination of God among the exceptionally favoured in a land favoured above all others. There are millions on millions on the earth ignorant of a Saviour's name, and thousands on thousands in this country scarcely, if at all, more happily situated than the heathen; not one of us had any higher claim on God's goodness than the wildest African savage or the most degraded dweller in the foulest lane of London; and yet how His goodness has abounded towards us, placing us where many temptations were shut off from us, or could only feebly reach us, where we had countless

inducements to conduct ourselves worthily, where kindly and elevating sympathies surrounded us, where moral aid and encouragement abounded, where all Gospel privileges were free to us and pressed upon us. Clearly we are among those whose habitual feelings should be deepest gratitude to God for His mercies, and a pitying active love for those who have not been favoured as we have been.

But is it so? Conscience will say it has often been quite otherwise. God's goodness and the claims of our less favoured brethren we have overlooked or forgotten. Our narrow, envious, selfish hearts, turning away from recognition of the blessings they enjoyed, and giving no heed to the fact that multitudes lacked what they possessed, have singled out this and that individual as morally better placed, better situated than ourselves, and this belief, although not unlikely a delusion, has been enough to cause us to feel as if God had dealt but hardly with us,—as if He might well have done more for us,—as if He ought hardly to expect the whole love of our hearts and the whole service of our lives, whatever He may do from those to whom He has been kinder. Thus instead of responding as we ought to the manifestation of God's sovereignty in the ordering of our moral circumstances with gratitude to God and compassion and help to men, we contrive to respond to it with a charge of injustice on God's part towards ourselves and with envious grieving at the good He has done to others. For such perversity there can, of course, be no excuse, and we cannot too anxiously pray and strive to be freed from it.

Again, God shows His sovereignty, His freedom of action, in the unequal distribution of mental powers which He makes among men. To one man He gives five talents, to another two, to another only one. This likewise is a trying fact and brings out in many a heart unjust and bitter thoughts both towards God and towards man. It is a painful thing to have the consciousness forced on you that your abilities are inferior to those of others; that others can do the very work in which you are most anxious to excel, more easily, more skilfully, more successfully than you can. It is a severe trial to many boys at school and young men at college, for example, to find that in spite of their most strenuous efforts to obtain some legiti-

mate distinction a fellow-scholar or fellow-student can by an easy exertion carry it away from them; and that it is a keen trial is made obvious by this, that they will very often rather say that they have not been diligent in trying to succeed than unable to do so; that they will rather acknowledge neglect of duty than want of ability.

It requires a very fair and honest mind, and one which has habituated itself to self-denial of the selfishness and evil natural to it, to be able sincerely and fully to confess that another has greater and better abilities than itself, and yet to feel no envy, no discontent. Many a man will not allow himself to see the superiority of others, but will set himself instead most assiduously and ingeniously to depreciate their gifts,—to convince himself that this and that other talent for which they get credit are no true talents,—and that their reputations are a delusion, while his own merits have been overlooked. The narrow, envious heart of such a man—and there are many such men—cannot bear to let into it the generous thought of another's superiority. And then, if it cannot help letting that thought in,—if the evidence be so strong as to overcome its utmost resistance,—its envy comes out only all the more; it grudges the man the gifts God has given him, it is jealous of every little petty distinction these gifts may gain him, it is grieved even at the good these gifts do, it has no contentment with or gratitude for what God has given to itself because He has not given it more, and it murmurs against Him as if He had dealt harshly and unjustly with it. Oh! it is a hateful, a wicked temper of spirit this, and it will be but a mild rebuke of it, although true to the very letter, if God only says to those who cherish it, "I have done you no wrong. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

Let us try, through God's help, to free ourselves from this mean and sinful frame of character. Let us discipline ourselves to acknowledge all that is really true about ourselves, and not to be ashamed of any inferiority which is of God's appointment and not the result of our own negligence or folly. It is for God alone to decide whether our natural abilities shall be great or small; it is for us thankfully to receive and dili-

gently to use them, whether great or small, striving to make the very most of them for the good of others and the glory of Him who gave them. If we do so it will probably in the end matter much less whether they have been great or small than we are apt to think. Two talents made four equal, in Heaven's reckoning, five talents made ten.

I need only mention another, a fourth class of cases in which the sovereignty of God meets us. He in the exercise of His rights as the Creator gives men very different moral dispositions, very different passions, propensities, and tempers. There are instances of persons, unhappy persons, so strangely constituted morally, with such apparently irresistible tendencies to evil, that a great many people now believe that there may be an insanity which affects the moral nature alone, and hurries into deeds of horror those whose intellects are sound. Let us suppose, however, that those who have come to this conclusion have gone too far, yet I think we shall at least not deny that there are persons approaching in some degree to this state, persons of specially low moral organisation, who have coarse and strong passions, tempers violent and difficult to control, and little intellect, and a feeble power of moral resistance. It is not pleasant to think of such a fact, but we must accustom ourselves to look on many a fact which is not pleasant, and this seems one of them, that God gives men very differently constituted moral natures.

It is easy to see how it may give rise both to murmuring against God and envying of fellow-men. He who has been again and again overcome and humiliated by a propensity against which he has prayed and struggled is apt to feel as if God had done him wrong by creating him with a passion so wild and strong, as if He had doomed him to degradation and sin by the very constitution of his being; and he is apt also to envy those who are free from the violent temper or the strong lust by which he has been himself so often enslaved and disgraced. "Why hast Thou made me thus?" he murmurs against God. "How hard and shameful a lot is mine," he repiningly complains, "compared with that of those whom I can see to have been born with naturally placid and amiable dispositions, with equable, unexcitable minds, without keen cravings for pleasure

or indulgence, and for whom it is easy to resist temptation and to practise virtue." But such murmurings and envyings also are unreasonable and unjust. God has a right to make it easier for one to be virtuous than another if He please. He dooms no one to sin or to failure in the struggle against sin, because however strong may be the propensity to evil in any one whom He holds responsible at all, He is ready to bestow on him grace stronger than the propensity—grace sufficient to master and control, to purify and sanctify it. He takes account in judging us of the strength of our passions, and will approve us all the more if those against which we have faithfully contended have been exceptionally strong and perverse. It is a good thing to have a naturally gentle and loving disposition; but in God's sight it is a far more pleasing and noble thing to have subdued a naturally harsh temper into gentleness and to have converted a naturally selfish heart into a generous and self-denying one. The grandest triumphs both of human will and of Divine grace have been seen not in the naturally amiable and constitutionally virtuous, but in those naturally and constitutionally the reverse. Here too the last may be first, and there is no respect of persons with God.

Now, in conclusion, this is the burden of our whole argument. With whatever God is pleased to ordain for us let us seek to be content. He only has a right to determine our circumstances, our abilities, our duties. Let us acquiesce in His will towards us whatever it be, and we shall not fail to find, as our experience grows, that it is a good and gracious one, however far it may at first have seemed from being so. Let us commit our way wholly unto the Lord, assured that the result will always be this blessed one, that although it may still remain so far true that we do not fully know why God has made this and the other circumstance seemingly to our disadvantage,—that this is one of the Lord's "secrets,"—yet we shall also gradually learn to know that this, like many other "secrets" of the Lord, is "with them that fear Him," for our whole life once submitted to God's will and guidance will turn out to be a reason for what He has done, and seeming disadvantages will be found to have been real helps, seeming signs of want of love real proofs of the tenderest love. Let our care be not to



choose our tasks but to choose to do them well; let us not spend our time in idle talking about what *we would have done* if God had only given us greater powers and more advantages than He has seen fit to do, and still less in sinful complaining that He has not been liberal unto us, and cannot expect much from us; but let us use honestly and heartily in His service whatever powers and advantages we have. And far, far be from us envy of any advantages which our fellow-workers may have received from God, or of any good which they may be able to do for His cause; but may ours be the true and loving hearts which rejoice in the good of others as in their own, and to which every advance of Christ's kingdom causes a sacred, sincere, and deep joy. Such hearts as these, and the lives which flow from them, my dear friends, may God of His mercy and love, through His Holy Spirit and for the sake of His dear Son, grant unto us all, that we may do His work here and enjoy His blessedness hereafter. And to His name be the glory now and for ever. Amen.

## XXIII.

### RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S.<sup>1</sup>

“Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.”—MATTHEW xxii. 21.

TO understand these words of our Lord we must take into account the circumstances in which they were spoken. His life on earth was near a close; His trial and crucifixion were at hand. His enemies had resolved on getting rid of Him; but His enthusiastic Messianic reception by the multitude as He entered Jerusalem to keep the Passover showed them the danger of directly employing force against Him; and so they had recourse to craft, and sought to destroy His reputation in order that they might take His life. Hence the plot of the Pharisees and Herodians of which we read in the verses preceding the text.

They resolved to put a question to Him which could only be so answered as either to discredit Him with the Jewish people or bring Him into conflict with the Roman magistrates. It was a question which He could not refuse to answer; which as a claimant to be the Messianic King He was bound to answer; a question which was troubling many an honest Jewish conscience. Those who devised it seem to have been afraid, however, that He might not answer, and so they approached Him with words of insincere praise of His honesty and fearlessness, hoping thus to deceive Him, and to get from Him such an answer as they wished. “Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou regardest not the person of men.” Then comes their question. “Tell us, therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?” In

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, and in the Parish Church of Scone during the Parliamentary Election of 1894.

other words, Is it right or not for a Jew, a man under the law and government which God had specially and directly instituted, a subject of the Theocracy, to pay the poll-tax which the Roman Emperor claimed as the ruler of Israel; to render to Cæsar the denarius, the silver penny, the ordinary day's wage of a labourer, which he exacted, and thereby to acknowledge himself Cæsar's servant?

This question a vast majority of the Jewish people might honestly have put; but those who put it on the occasion referred to did so dishonestly, hypocritically, with a wicked intention; not because it was troubling and vexing them, and they wished enlightenment and peace of mind, but because they wished so to entangle Christ in His talk as to ruin Him. But *He perceived their wickedness*, their cruel and malicious purpose, and the base and double way in which they sought to accomplish it, and by a single word He unmasked and exposed them, showed them that they had not deceived Him, and that He really was what they had in flattery and with evil design said He was—one who spoke the truth without fear or respect of persons. For as such an one He now spoke to them—"Why tempt ye Me, hypocrites?" With His calm, truthful, searching eyes resting on these wretched men, that one word, *hypocrites*, was all that was needed in the way of rebuke. The significance of it would only have been marred, the impressiveness of it only weakened, by any addition.

But He answered the question of these men. For He wished that there should be no ambiguity, no doubt, as to what His doctrine was. Perhaps He indicated, however, by the "Why tempt ye me?" that the question need not have been asked; and would not have been asked by any one who had given proper attention to His teaching as to the nature of His kingdom. However, He answered it. He asked for a sight of the tribute money, and when a denarius was handed to Him He inquired of them whose was the image and inscription which He saw on it. Both the likeness and the name inscribed were those of a Cæsar, probably of Tiberius Cæsar. The answer, therefore, was "Cæsar's." But that meant that Cæsar had been accepted as their master; that they were circulating Cæsar's coin among them; that they were receiving services

from Cæsar, and had engaged to render services to Cæsar in return.

The Jews might have been wrong in submitting to Cæsar; it might be right for them to renounce their allegiance and to endeavour to throw off the yoke of Cæsar. Christ was not questioned on these points, and He said nothing regarding them. If He had been questioned on them He would probably have refused to answer, as He had not come to earth to deal with such questions; or possibly He would have advised them out of humanity not to draw the sword, seeing that if they did they must perish by the sword, as no supernatural aid would be granted to them in a struggle with Rome. But as to the question put to Him He answers it plainly. The coin they had showed Him of itself clearly testified that they were confessedly and in fact the subjects of Cæsar, ruled by him, and under obligations to him. So long as the rule of Cæsar and obligations to Cæsar lasted they were clearly bound to yield the obedience and pay the tribute which they had promised to give. There could be no opposition between rendering unto Cæsar what was Cæsar's, and unto God what was God's; on the contrary, duty to God required them to pay to Cæsar, as to every one, all that they owed. Therefore, said our Lord, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's."

It was a noble, a sublime answer. Christ's enemies thought that they had contrived a trap into which Christ must fall, and declare Himself either a defender or the rival of Cæsar. They only afforded Him an opportunity of making it once more perfectly clear that He had not come into the world either to be the defender or the rival of Cæsar, or to mingle in any political contentions, and at the same time an opportunity of affirming a principle which should underlie and regulate all politics—the principle that politics is dependent on morality, and that morality is based on the law of God.

The nobleness, the sublimity of the answer lies chiefly, however, in its simple truthfulness. Many have so misunderstood it as to see in it a skilful evasion of the question which was put. They have admired the ingenuity by which Christ, as they say, got rid of the dilemma contrived for His hurt, and avoided the

snare set to entrap Him. I should be sorry to have to think that Christ ever exercised any ingenuity in skilful evasion. He displayed none of it on the occasion under consideration. His answer was perfectly unambiguous, absolutely honest. He evaded no dilemma. He said, Give to Cæsar this tribute money, and whatever else is his. He tried to escape out of no difficulty. He had taught that He was a King, and He did not withdraw a word of that teaching; so that His enemies were left able to pretend that He was the foe of Cæsar. He had taught also that His kingdom was not of this world, and that He was not going to interfere with Cæsar; but the people were unwilling to understand Him; they sang Hosannas to Him because they hoped that He would deliver Israel. Now, again, He speaks; but it is only finally and bitterly to disappoint them; only to tell them that He will countenance no revolt, put forth no effort to break the chains which bound Judea, satisfy no patriotic illusion. He speaks freely, plainly, boldly; but it is to turn away the hearts of the people from Himself, to destroy His own popularity, to seal His own doom.

Hail, Jesus, Master, we know indeed that Thou art true, the Truth. Thou art the King we need, whom we would honour, love, and obey. Oh, may we live in Thee that we may be true like Thee, fearing no man, neither regarding the person of men.

“Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.” What do these words mean for us? We shall see as we proceed. Of course, they are far from meaning to us what they meant to the Jews. We, thank God, are a free people, subject to no alien government, no foreign conqueror. They are far even from meaning to us what they would have meant to the Romans. We are under no Cæsar in the sense of an absolute ruler, a personal despot. It is to be hoped that in that sense the whole world may soon see the last of the Cæsars. For us here and now in Britain Cæsar is simply the Civil Government, or rather the nation, the community, as represented by the Civil Government, or governing itself in civil affairs. But the words, “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” have not, therefore, lost for us their significance and importance. Nay, there is surely a far stronger call on us, as the

free citizens of the great historic nation in which God has graciously cast our lot, to remember the civil responsibilities which lie upon us, and the civil ties which bind us to the community as a whole, than there would have been if we had been in the position either of the Jew or the Roman.

It would ill become us to forget them. For there is not one among us who does not receive great and precious benefits through his connection with the government of the realm. Our quiet, the safety of our persons and property, our work and wages, our freedom of speech, our liberty to worship God according to the dictates of conscience—all these, and countless other advantages, are secured to us by its power, preserved and protected by the might and majesty of the laws. The industry of the labourer, the skill of the artisan, the enterprise of the merchant, the hardiness of the sailor, the valour of the soldier and the wisdom of the statesman, the sweet fancies of the poet and the abstruse researches of the philosopher, talents, virtues, and graces—all these, under that happy constitution which our fathers, having bought and sealed and consecrated it even with their blood, have handed down to us, work together for good to the humble villager in the remotest hamlet, and contribute somewhat to bless and beautify his life, although he may not know whence or how the benefit comes. Responsibility is always in proportion to privilege. Where much is given, there much is required.

“Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.” What are these things? They are many; for the precept is of wide application. It gives expression to a comprehensive principle. It enjoins no less than the rendering to the supreme civil authority under which we live all to which it is entitled; it enjoins no less than the fulfilment of all civil duty.

It was originally given, as you perceive, with reference to payment of tribute to the Roman emperor. Tribute we are fortunately not called upon to pay. A people which pays tribute is a humiliated people, a people at least partially enslaved, a people extremely likely to seek opportunities for revolt and revenge. The nearest thing to tribute which we can pay in Britain is something which is yet essentially different from it, and in the payment of which there is no humiliation,

but only the manifest performance of duty,—I mean the taxes, our shares or proportions of the public burdens, of the expenses necessarily incurred by the nation in performing its national functions. These, it is obvious, we are bound honestly and cheerfully to pay. They are indispensable to the national well-being and the discharge of national duty; they are so applied, in this country at least, as to benefit every individual in it. In no nation in the world are they more justly apportioned, or more honestly administered, than in our own. Gradually our statesmen of all parties have come to see clearly that the justest and, on the whole, least burdensome taxes are the most remunerative. There is no excuse for our endeavouring to keep from Cæsar this portion of what is his.

But no one can be so foolish as to fancy that he fulfils all civil duty by merely contributing to the revenue of the nation so far as it is compulsory for him to do so. The nation has a right to much else from us than a little money.

For instance, secondly, it has a right to our sincere, and intelligent, and unselfish interest in its welfare. It is natural and almost inevitable that we should love the land of our birth, of our forefathers, and of the famous memories which we have been taught from infancy to cherish. He who does not must be wanting in some of the essential feelings of our common humanity, or have done violence to some of its primitive instincts. It is in perfect accord with the will of God that we should possess this love. He desires that our country should be dear to us. He demands only that our love should be purged from ignorance, so as to be no blind instinct such as makes the wild beast defend its forest or mountain lair; and purged from selfishness, so as to manifest itself not in contempt and enmity towards strangers, but in readiness to make whatever sacrifices the good of our own countrymen calls for.

It is only when the love of country is thus enlightened and disinterested that it is worthy of the name of patriotism. Then it is a most admirable and excellent affection. It is in the State what brotherly love is in the Church—so binding the various individuals of the community together into a single body, that “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice

with it." This obligation which is upon us to love our country, and to take a lively interest in the welfare of those who inhabit it, does not in the least imply that there is to be any neglect of private duties through interference with public affairs. It is a grievous misfortune both for individuals themselves and the public when that occurs. It is a sure symptom that the body politic is in a diseased and dangerous condition when the masses of the community become engrossed in political agitation. Patriotism is very rarely the cause of such commotion. It is when the sacred name of patriotism is profaned to ignoble purposes, when under the pretence of patriotism men carry on a mean scramble for personal advantages, or class arrays itself in hatred and hostility to class, it is then that private duties are forgotten or despised; that individuals start up as teachers on subjects the very elements of which they have never learned; that the peace of society is endangered and its progress impeded. A true interest in our country's welfare, a pure and honest patriotism, is never the source of these excesses. What is true of the charity which St Paul eulogises is true of it. It is, in fact, that same charity in a different sphere, and modified accordingly. It vaunts not itself; it is not easily provoked; it seeks not its own. It, in other words, carefully conforms to all the conditions on which the harmony and happiness of a nation depend.

Thirdly, obedience ought to be rendered. The Apostles have enjoined us to do so in a manner so earnest and emphatic, that it was long a prevalent dogma that this obedience had virtually no limits, no measure—that in no circumstances could resistance be justifiable. The dogma of "the divine right of kings," as it was called, was maintained in a revolting and debasing form. And as presented it was a mere fiction. God has placed kings and other magistrates in authority to promote public happiness, to carry out public justice; but He has given them no other authority, and that, instead of being a justification of arbitrary and oppressive government, is the strongest condemnation of it. Cæsar has no right to put himself in the place of God. It is at our peril if we obey him at the expense of God.

In the present day there are those who believe in the Divine right of the people, the so-called sovereignty of the people, in



as degrading and servile a manner as their forefathers believed in the Divine right of kings. For them whatever the majority of the people, or of their representatives, decree is to be regarded as ultimately right and absolutely entitled to obedience. I believe in the Divine right only of God Himself, in the absolute sovereignty only of Him who is absolutely just and righteous. I shall, I trust, never acknowledge the Divine right or absolute sovereignty of any one else; or ever hesitate to disobey any law of monarch, or parliament, or people clearly contrary in my view to that Divine law to which monarch, parliament, and the whole body of the people owe allegiance equally with the humblest individual citizen.

But while I maintain it to be not only my right but my duty to break any law, passed by whomsoever it may be, which plainly breaks God's law, I must take care so to break it as not myself in so doing to break God's law. I must not in opposing an evil law betake myself to evil ways, to falsehood or treachery, cruelty, plunder, and murder, as, under the plea of resisting evil laws, many did, not long ago, in a part of this empire. A man who respects morality, who honours the law of God, who accepts the precepts of Christ, can have no part in action of this kind; can have no sympathy with those implicated in it; must condemn all who would condone it or excuse it. Those who honour God's law never fail to give reasonable obedience to human law, never countenance real disorder or crime in the State.

The direct demands which the well-ordered government of this realm makes upon our obedience are so few, and light, and just, that it would be inexcusable indeed if they were not cheerfully responded to. It has come, in fact, to be the case, that instead of troublesome personal services being exacted as in former times, the chief service we can now render to our country is to prosecute, each one of us in his own place and relations, the private pursuits he is engaged in, quietly, diligently, justly, piously. A sober, righteous, godly life—that is now the main substance of what is asked from us. That which secures our own temporal and eternal welfare contributes most also to the strength of the nation, to the happiness of the community.

Fourthly, the nation, or the government of the nation, has

a right to expect from us careful, independent, disinterested thought as to what is for the real good of the nation; and that, whenever there is a call on us to do so, we honestly act on the conclusions to which such thought leads us. God also demands this from us. In a country like ours, where public opinion has so powerful an influence, we are obviously bound to try to contribute to public opinion only independent and well-considered decisions. When it becomes our duty to take part in a transaction which may or must seriously affect the prosperity of the nation, we are bound to realise the greatness of the responsibility which lies upon us, and that we shall be unworthy citizens, and sin against God, if we do not prefer the welfare of the nation to the triumph of any party, or to any personal ends.

My friends, this consideration cannot be too much present to us just now. Not in the days of any of us has there been an election the result of which is likely so seriously to affect the greatness of Britain, its unity as an empire, the future of Protestant and still more of Roman Catholic Ireland, the fate of the Church of Scotland, and the prospects of religion in Scotland, as that which is so soon to be decided. Deeply impressed although I am with the seriousness of the situation, and the magnitude of the dangers which threaten us, and which we may easily bring upon the nation by our inconsiderateness and want of earnestness, yet I shall not depart from that position of political neutrality which befits God's house; but I only fulfil my duty in this house when I solemnly remind every one who has the function of an elector to discharge that he will be responsible to God for the manner in which he discharges it, and that he will grievously err and sin if in the discharge of it he allow himself to be influenced by any other motive than a desire for the national good, for the advancement of true religion, for the glory of God.

All that we owe to Cæsar we owe also to God. All that we render unto Cæsar we should render as unto God. Whenever we have to do with duty we have to do with God. It is He who assigns it; He who gives power to perform it; He who will judge how it has been performed, and approve or condemn, reward or punish, accordingly.

Therefore, I would say, finally, that prayer to God for the nation, and that He may enable us to discharge aright all our duty to the nation, is itself a duty to the nation. The nation has a right to such prayer. The Lord reigneth. He doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and among the children of men. He raiseth up and pulleth down, according as it seemeth good to Him. The issues of prosperity and adversity are in His hands. Therefore prayer will avail much. The earnest prayer of the true Christian at least will avail much.

Let us, then, prepare ourselves for duty to the nation by seeking from God the enlightenment of mind, the singleness and disinterestedness of heart, the strength of character which we need. His grace is required to make us genuine patriots, loyal subjects, faithful citizens; let us not fail to seek it. Let us pray that He may show us the folly and danger of any policy which will weaken the nation, restrict liberty, lower morality, increase the power of religious superstition, or check the growth of material prosperity. For all in authority, let us pray that they may have the spirit of wisdom and judgment, and faithfully discharge the responsibilities of their offices, while we, under them, giving them all due respect, may lead quiet and peaceable lives, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

For our country, our native land, which so many associations have endeared and hallowed to our hearts, let us pray that God would be pleased to bless and prosper it, at home and abroad, in the persons of all classes, and in all its interests. Especially let us implore that it may be made wholly the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that at His name every knee among us may bow, and every heart among us leap for joy.

May God follow with His blessing what has now been said. And to His name be praise, honour, and glory for evermore. Amen.

## XXIV.

### WORK WHILE IT IS DAY.<sup>1</sup>

“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.”—JOHN ix. 4.

THESE words, as you will perceive, were spoken by our Lord just before He proceeded to heal a blind man. The time, He knew, was drawing near when His work on earth would be finished, and He wished to leave no part of it imperfect, no act which He had been sent to do undone, no deed of mercy by which He could show forth the glory of the Father and the character of His own Gospel unaccomplished. The words in the text by which He gave expression to this feeling are as clear and plain as they are striking and beautiful, so that of mere explanation they scarcely need any. The only point, indeed, in regard to which difficulty has been felt in their interpretation is whether our Lord meant by “the works of Him that sent Him,” *the works given Him to do by Him who sent Him*, or *such works as He who sent Him worketh*, namely, works of power and mercy. But these two meanings, you will observe, by no means exclude each other, nor was there any necessity for our Lord to distinguish them, or to choose the one and to reject the other. He is rather to be supposed to have had both meanings indissolubly in His thought. For the works which the Father sent the Son to do were just the works which the Father Himself worketh; the works which the Son wrought among men were just the works which showed forth the character of the nature and working of Him from whom He came and to whom He was about to return. To reveal His Father to the children of men for their salvation, *that* was the great and comprehensive work which His Father had given Him to do, and on which

<sup>1</sup> Preached in St George's Church, Edinburgh, on first Sabbath of a new year.

His own heart was set, and in that work all His particular works, the healing of this blind man among them, were included, so that we have to take His words in their general, large, obvious sense, and may safely dismiss from our minds the distinctions and discussions of critics and commentators.

Our Lord spoke these words concerning Himself, not concerning other men, not concerning us. Even He found a motive and incentive to His zeal in the knowledge that He was here on earth but for a short time, with a great task to perform before the hour of His departure arrived. He felt that when He had so little time in the world He must lose no fragment of it, but must employ every instant in glorifying the Father and doing good to men. As long as He was in the world, as long as the day of His activity in human form lasted, He was Himself the light of the world; but that day was fast drawing to a close, and, therefore, there was the more need that He should allow the light which was in Him to shine forth brightly and without interruption. To study the words of our text in this their immediate and primary application with reference to our Lord Himself and to His work might well suggest many profitable thoughts. It is not thus, however, that I wish to-day to consider them. They are words of universal applicability; words which all men may use, and solemn words for any man to use. There is not one of us who has not had a work given him to do, and who has not merely a short day at the longest in which to do it, and towards whom the night in which he cannot work is not rapidly drawing near. This seems the reference in which it will be most appropriate for us to consider the text now, when we have just crossed the threshold of another year, when thoughts about the shortness, the changes, and vicissitudes of existence, about duty and about destiny, about the past, the present, and future, about the world that is and the world to come, are in many ways naturally suggested to us.

Each man has a great work given him to do, which he is in great danger of not doing. The contemplation of human life cannot but constantly fill us with sadness, just because it is so seldom what it might be and what it ought to be. When

we look at other things we see each object in the world filling its proper place; doing what it was obviously created to do, no more and no less; acting according to and acting up to the true laws of the nature which it has received; but when we look at the life of man there is a strange contrast, for it ever falls far below and is often utterly unlike what it should be. Man's nature has powers and capacities for good which would produce the most blessed results if well developed and well directed; it contains in germ an amazing wealth of faculties, to the progress and perfection of which scarcely any limits can be set; it may rise to the sublimest heights; it may attain to stages of excellence almost inconceivable; it may advance from glory to glory without end; it has the image of God upon it, the seed of an imperishable life within it; and the firmament with all its stars is mean in comparison with what it would be in any man who was true to his own true self.

A child is born to a beggar. It may grow up untrained and untaught, ignorant, rude, and brutal; it may become a thief and a murderer; it may die unregretted in banishment or on the scaffold; and yet in that new-born babe there are boundless possibilities of good, although they will never come to be realities; in that little body covered with a beggar's rag there is a soul capable of containing far more knowledge than ever Newton possessed, with greater powers of action than were exerted even by a Luther or a Napoleon, and with the rudiments of affections which might have flowered into a holiness surpassing that of Edwards or Brainard. There is something more solemn in the soul of a child than in all the victories of kings or the achievements of genius. So much greater is man than any of man's works.

When we turn from human nature in its true essential self to human nature in its actual results, a terrible disappointment awaits us. This human nature, which ought to be so great and noble, is everywhere seen assuming the meanest and most ignoble forms. There are whole nations where it is utterly degraded and brutalised, their inhabitants bowing down to hideous idols and giving themselves up to the practice of inhuman vices. And even in our own highly-favoured

land there are multitudes dead to infinite and eternal realities and alive only to sensuous objects and selfish interests. When we survey the history of the race we see among all nations and in every age the virtues of truth, integrity, justice, benevolence, unselfishness, and continence, grievously violated. The history of nations has been largely the history of crime. When we leave the wide field of history, when we keep our eyes open to what is going on every day around us, when we observe the conduct of men to each other, when we hear the words they use to and regarding each other, when we mark how they bear themselves in reference to the regulation of their passions and appetites, how much reason have we to be ashamed of our fellow-men! When we withdraw our attention from others, when we summon up our own past conduct, when we mark the operations of our own minds from day to day, when we consider whether or not we have loved our neighbours as ourselves, done to others as we would that others should do to us, and kept our souls unspotted from the world, unstained from all impure and injurious thoughts, how much reason have we to be ashamed of ourselves!

“ If human sin confronts the rigid law  
 Of perfect truth and virtue, awe  
 Seizes and saddens thee to see how far  
 Beyond thy reach perfection ; if we test  
 By the ideal of the good, the best,  
 How mean our efforts and our actions are !  
 This space between the ideal of man’s soul  
 And man’s achievement who hath ever passed ?  
 An ocean spreads between us and that goal,  
 Where anchor ne’er was cast.”

This mystery that while mere physical existences should all be put, as it were, to use, of human souls, of thought and feeling, of knowledge, virtue, and holiness, or, in a word, of all that is highest and most precious in the universe, there should be such seemingly lavish, reckless, inexplicable waste, may well at times present itself to us as perfectly appalling. One of the Hebrew prophets looking at it with earnest eye and troubled heart, considerably more than two thousand years ago, could not, prophet although he was, with clear,

deep glances into God's principles of moral government, help crying out in agony, "Lord, hast Thou made all men in vain?" Of course, that is a thought from which we must haste to get free. There is light and guidance to be found only in the very opposite conviction. Our life would be, indeed, a bitter mockery, if God had made us only for failure and destruction. If God were against us, who or what could be for us? But no! God is for us. God has made one and all of us for eternal life—for the highest destiny to which our natures point,—for the continuous and progressive realisation and enjoyment of the truth, beauty, and goodness, in which alone our souls can find their real happiness,—for that intimate communion with Himself which is at once eternal life and perfect blessedness.

Only He has given us a terrible power to waste the riches both of our own natures and of His grace. We may exert our faculties or allow them to rust in idleness; we may exert them rightly or wrongly. We may seek good or evil; may choose life or death; may keep the body and its appetites in subjection to reason and conscience or allow what is lowest to rule us, while neglecting and despising what is highest. Life has been given us for good and noble ends, but we can only attain these ends if we aim earnestly and straightly at them, and steadily and strenuously labour to reach them. Life brings with it heavy responsibilities. The work of living well is not meant to be to any one a thing easily done. The works which God gives us to do, and through the doing of which we can alone reach the true goal of our lives, are serious tasks, demanding careful thought, constant watchfulness, incessant self-denial, and the utmost exertion of which we are capable.

For we have to work our way out of the darkness of ignorance in which we are born into the clear light of thorough knowledge as to the chief relationships of our existence; out of a region of doubt and uncertainty into that of well-founded faith and settled conviction. We have to subdue the rude, confused, proud, rebellious natures within us into order, peace, gentleness, and obedience to moral and spiritual law. We have to resist and overcome all evil lusts and train ourselves into Christian habits of thought, feeling, and action. We have



to learn to love what the carnal heart naturally hates and to hate what it naturally loves. We have to habituate ourselves to denying ourselves, and to having no will of our own at variance with the holy will of God. Whatever that will demands we are to rejoice to do. Wherever it leads we are to be ready to follow.

We are bound to aim at completely realising the highest ideal of life which reason and conscience honestly exercised set before us, for such an ideal is just the very best or utmost which we, in our circumstances and with our faculties, could be or do,—the highest kind of life, the noblest life, which we believe attainable by us were we fully to exert all the powers we possess and fully to avail ourselves of all the Divine grace offered us. It is not any mere fancy or desire about life—it is not merely what a man would like to be or what he can imagine himself to be. The ideal of reason—the ideal in morality and religion—is a very different thing from the ideal of imagination,—the ideal in poetry and romance; it is what reveals itself to each soul as the true plan of life for that soul, as God's gracious purpose and counsel regarding it, as that which it may and should, yea, as that which it must conform to, if it would escape grievous loss and severe penalties. So understood, it is, strictly speaking, absurd to say a man cannot live up to his ideal, for his ideal is just the height to which he can live up, and to which God commands him to live up. What any man absolutely cannot do is no ideal for him, nor does God ask him to do it. It is something with which he has no concern. Therefore, I repeat, it is self-evident that a man ought to live up to the ideal of his duty, of his life. Yet, alas! we all know, how great is the distance between goodness in idea and in fact,—between the ideal and the actual. We must all have felt the sadness which the poet describes, in the lines I have already quoted, as caused by the sight of the ocean which stretches between these two,—which spreads between us and our goal. But why is there this feeling of sadness, why is there also self-reproach? Simply because we are conscious that a more steadfast and faithful heart, a more energetic and manful will, might have traversed the intervening space,

might at least have brought us nearer to our goal. We reproach ourselves because our falling short of our ideal proves to us that we have an evil heart, an evil will.

The distance between the ideal and its realisation is vast, but it is by no means the whole distance of man's shortcoming. The ideals of men are always lower, less comprehensive, less pure than they ought to be. We are not only under obligation to do whatever we apprehend to be right, but we are under obligation so to study God's revelation of Himself to us in nature and Scripture, so to exercise our reasons and consciences, and to cherish such dispositions, that we shall perceive to be right all of right that we can. If there ever be a perfect moral judgment pronounced on the children of men, as we know there will be, every man will be judged according to his conscience, and yet no man will be judged merely according to his conscience. Unconscientiousness is always wrong, but man's conscientiousness is never as broad as the law of his duty. Man must, if judged justly, be judged not only by his conscience but for his conscience, and when one reflects what conscience is in multitudes of men, yea, in multitudes of nations, it appears not improbable that the judgment for conscience may be as terrible as the judgment by conscience. The unknown sins of men may be even more numerous and grievous than their known sins.

Therefore the law of our lives can be no other than this, to seek earnestly to know every work which He who sent us into the world would have us to do and then faithfully to do it,—to strive to apprehend God's will concerning us in all its length and breadth and then exactly to conform to it. It is a most comprehensive law, and its requirements will not be met, as they should be, even by the longest and best spent lives. We may work our hardest, and still when our time of labour draws to a close we shall have much reason to regret not having done more. The task is great; the day for doing it is short; and the danger is serious that the night come upon us when we have lamentably, shamefully, little done.

The day is short. When another year has gone into the dead past beyond our recall for ever—when we look back and think how rapidly, and, it may be, how unprofitably it has

glided away—the impression of this truth may be vivid upon us, but we seldom feel it as we ought. It is not useless admonition which Scripture gives us when it insists so often on life's brevity, comparing human existence to the most fleeting things in nature; to the mist which disappears before the sun, to the cloud driven by the winds, to the shadows that flit across the landscape, to the smoke that ascends and mingles with the atmosphere, to the leaf of the forest tree, and to the flower of the field. It cannot be compared to any of the more stable objects of nature. How many generations of men has the earth successively borne on her bosom; on how many generations have the sun and the moon looked down. There is many a tree still fresh and vigorous, although the hands that planted it have for centuries been dust. Man is far more fragile even than many of his own works. From the pyramids of Egypt more than "forty centuries look down upon us"; but where are the builders?

And the day of our life, I must add, is as uncertain as it is short. It is a day in which there is often no gradual fading away of the light to warn us that it is drawing near to a close. It is often with man's life as with countries in other zones than ours where night, instead of climbing gradually up the heavens and giving evidence of its approach by an ever deepening twilight, overspreads it at once and envelops all living creatures in sudden darkness. In the course we have to run there is no point, however near the one from which we started, where our race may not terminate. In the whole period of life usually allotted to man there is no year, month, week, day, or even instant, but it may be the last to each individual. There is no truth of which we are more frequently or strikingly reminded. There has been many an early and sudden death in the year that is past. So will it be with the year on which we have entered. Some of us here who have welcomed its entry will not witness its departure. It is hid from us who will be called away, or when the call will be given, or in what manner. It may be the feeble; they are likely to be summoned soon. It may be the old; they are certain to be summoned soon. But it may be the strongest here; it may be the youngest. This only we know, that when God gives

the command for us to depart we must obey, whether willing or not, whether ready or not.

Having now seen how great is the work we have to do, and how short and uncertain is the day in which we have to do it, I would in conclusion merely state some lessons which these facts, I think, fairly warrant us to draw.

Let this be the first. We should take in hand no other work than the work which God gives us to do—than the work of Him who hath sent us. That work is obviously of itself quite enough for us; and if we undertake work which God does not give us, such as work which is not intended for *us* but for some one else, or evil work which no one should do, or useless work which is a mere waste of labour, then, of course, we shall certainly not have time to work His works. His works demand all our time, all our faculties and energies—our whole heart, strength, and soul.

This suggests, next, that we cannot do God's works unless we have received His Spirit and accepted His will as the law of our lives so as to have become fellow-workers with Him. It is only those who surrender their hearts in faith and love to God—only those in whose souls God savingly works by His Holy Spirit—who can truly labour in God's service. Otherwise than through regeneration there is no possibility of becoming one of His workmen. His works are spiritual works which can only be performed by spiritual men. If we have not repented of our sins and turned from them to God; if we have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; if we have not come under the influence of the Holy Spirit; then, no matter how diligently and strenuously we may toil, or how useful our exertions may seem to ourselves or others, the works we do are not the works which God would have us to do, for they are not done in dependence on His Spirit.

Again, since the day on which we can work is short and uncertain, we should not act as if it were long and certain; since the night in which we cannot work cometh quickly, and may come suddenly, let us not act as if it were far off and we were sure to have abundant warnings given us of its approach. It is excessive folly so to act, and yet how common it is. Of heaven we do, indeed, read, that "there shall be no

night *there*," but what multitudes would seem, judging from their conduct, to have read is that there shall be no night *here*. Oh, my friends, it is not so; the night is coming surely and swiftly to us here, and it may be upon us at any moment. Act on this most certain knowledge. Do not trifle with the concerns of eternity, with the imperishable interests of your immortal souls. Do not add to the bitterness of death the bitterness of regret for work undone and remorse for duty despised. There is a sorrow of nature itself at the prospect of death. It cannot but sadden us to think that all familiar forms and faces must be seen by us no more; that the sun will never again rise for us; that the earth will still have her spring and summer, her autumn and winter, but for other eyes than ours. There is a deeper sorrow, however—the sorrow brought home to the heart by the conviction of unfaithfulness; of life wasted in a world where there was so much to be done; of things unaccomplished which a little honesty and exertion would have achieved; of faculties perverted from noble to ignoble uses. Since life is so short and uncertain it ought to be at least very real and earnest. Short as it is, it is long enough to earn either unspeakable happiness or unspeakable woe, and it will earn either the one or the other.

"Life is the season God hath given  
To fly from hell and rise to heaven."

Finally, let us remember that not only is night coming rapidly to us, but that it is also falling rapidly on others, so as to make it impossible to work for them, even while our own day is still lasting. Think of the heathen; think, say, of the millions in Hindostan, that in a few short years pass away from the light of day to the darkness of night. Is their rapid passage from day to night not a reason for our hastening to communicate to them the Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light? And the home heathen around us are not less to be pitied; and they, too, are passing away every hour into the awful darkness, where human help can no longer avail. Ay, even our own dear friends, the most loved members of our homes, may be summoned away from us, and we shall see them no more in the land of the

living. Will it not bring a bitter anguish to our hearts if they pass away without spiritual good derived by them from intercourse with us? Surely the thought that at an hour the most unlooked for—that at any moment—the night may come upon our loved ones, and hide them for ever from our sight, may well startle us into an anxious and earnest activity.

Let us say, then, as our Master said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.” May God give us grace and strength to do His holy will—to work His blessed works—during all the time He has allotted to us on earth. And to His name be praise and glory, now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## XXV.

### CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO OTHER RELIGIONS.<sup>1</sup>

**M**Y subject—Christianity in relation to other religions—is obviously far too extensive to be satisfactorily dealt with in a single lecture. I am entitled, however, to assume that my hearers do not need to be informed either what Christianity is, or what the chief other religions of the world are or have been. Your acquaintance with Christianity began from infancy, and has been constantly increasing. You know the facts on which it is founded,—the authoritative sources of information regarding it,—the general course of its eventful history,—the general character of the doctrinal systems to which it has given rise,—the ordinary objections which have been urged against it,—the chief evidences appealed to on its behalf, &c. As to other religions, eleven of them, comprising the most remarkable and most developed faiths of the world, have been described to you, in careful and comprehensive sketches, and in a fair and thoughtful spirit, by the lecturers who have preceded me. I may therefore confine myself entirely to a consideration of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, on the assumption that the things related do not need to be expounded or explained. This is what I mean to do.

Christianity is the only religion from which, and in relation to which, all other religions may be viewed in an impartial and truthful manner. It alone raises us to a height from which all the religions of the earth may be seen as they really are. Towering above them all, it is easy to perceive from it how far

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, and in Glasgow Cathedral, in 1882. It is the last of the series of lectures published under the general title of "The Faiths of the World: a Concise History of the Great Religious Systems of the World" (W. Blackwood & Sons, 1882).

they fall short of it in elevation, magnitude, and beauty, while yet from no other point can their actual grandeur be so clearly seen, their relations to one another so distinctly traced, and the significance of each of them as a revelation of God and of men so readily and fully understood. No other positive religion thus affords us a point of view from which all other religions may be surveyed, and from which their bad and their good features, their defects and their merits, are equally visible. The point of view of a rational theism—of what is called Natural Religion—is, doubtless, next to that of Christianity, the most advantageous position from which to judge of the various "Faiths of the World," but it is certainly far below it,—one from which a large portion of their contents must appear without meaning,—one from which the estimate formed of them can be neither so comprehensive nor so profound, neither so just nor so genial. Christianity alone occupies the lofty and central vantage-ground from which every phase and phenomenon of religion can be appreciated with all the exactness of human science and all the fulness of human sympathy. This is a remarkable fact; and as it takes us straight to the very heart of our subject, let us endeavour to apprehend the meaning of it.

Now it certainly means much more than merely that Christianity is the centre of religious history. It is true, indeed, that various religions, directly or indirectly, prepared the way for Christianity, and contributed more or less to its contents. It is true, also, that other religions have come into contact with it, and given place to it, at various stages of its course. But it is quite possible to represent the actual historical connection between Christianity and other religions as having been far closer than the facts warrant us to maintain. The religions of mankind are not to be conceived of as so many stages or phases of faith all leading up to Christianity and passing on to it the truths which had been successively but separately embodied in each. This view overlooks one of the most important distinctions between the Eastern and Western, the Asiatic and the European worlds. It is only in the latter, and there largely because of the influence of Christianity itself, that a common life and a common development of culture through a series of stages,



—that the rise and progress of a truly human history, comprehending many nations united in the bonds of spiritual brotherhood,—can be traced. The Eastern or Asiatic world, in which Christianity and so many other religions appeared, was essentially a complex or aggregate of coexistent peoples, with separate histories but no general history, each of these peoples being isolated or in little more than external contact with one another, each acting on principles or impulses peculiar to itself, and each proceeding on a different course from its neighbours. The creed of Confucius, so wonderfully correct as regards its moral precepts, was already old when taught by “the Master Kung” in the sixth century B.C., and it still rules the minds of about four hundred millions of human beings; but Christianity has certainly not borrowed from it a single thought or maxim. Brahmanism and Buddhism far surpass in profundity and wealth of spiritual and speculative thought all other heathen systems; but it is only in modern times that they have come into contact with Christianity, and only in quite recent times, and in connection with the pantheism and pessimism of Germany, that they can be held to have affected even in the slightest degree the estimates formed of Christianity by any European thinkers. Israel may have derived from Egypt some of her external rites and minor laws; but it seems clear that she did not derive thence anything of importance in the faith which she transmitted to Christianity. To the ancient Persian religion, the Jewish religion was much more closely akin in spirit than to the Egyptian, and Judaism was manifestly quickened and strengthened by its contact with Mazdeism during the Babylonian captivity, and may even, perhaps, have been enriched with certain secondary beliefs, which afterwards received, in modified forms, divine sanction. It only assimilated, however, what was consistent with its own principles, and returned from exile essentially unaltered, although with a larger faith and fuller hope in the coming of that kingdom which the Christ was to establish.

Christianity, in fact, so far from being the result or synthesis of all previous religions, or of many previous religions, was in immediate and intimate historical connection with only two religious developments of thought—one Semitic and the other

Aryan—the Hebrew and the Hellenistic, the Jewish and the Grecian. Its primary and fundamental relationship was with the former. It assumed the religion of Israel as its basis. It professed to be the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, to have done away with whatever was imperfect in them, to have retained whatever they included of permanent value, and to be the full corn in the ear of every seed of truth sown, and of every blade of promise developed, in them. The more thoroughly we investigate this claim the more we shall become impressed with its justice. There is not a prominent doctrine of the Bible of which such propositions as these may not be laid down,—namely, that it was evolved from simple facts or statements of a rudimentary or germinal kind; that the course of its development was gradual, closely associated with the history of events, and through a succession of stages, in each of which the doctrine was extended and enriched; that this course was throughout one of progress, constantly unfolding into greater clearness and comprehensiveness; that the evolution was imperfect before the New Testament era; and that the New Testament fulfilment actually gave to the doctrine developed the self-consistency of completeness, so that it thereafter only required to be apprehended and applied. These affirmations may almost be regarded as laws of the important science of Biblical theology, because they hold true of all Biblical doctrines. Judaism and Christianity are connected by all the truths of both, and by all the threads or strands of the history of these truths. Judaism brought nothing to maturity; but the whole religion of Israel was a prophecy of Christianity. This can only be fully established and exhibited by the entire science of Biblical theology. But the most cursory survey of the authoritative records of the Jewish and Christian religions is sufficient to show us that the connection of Judaism and Christianity was very peculiar and very wonderful.

The latest portions of the Old Testament appeared generations before the birth of Christ,—its earliest portions belong to an unknown antiquity—its intervening portions were written at intervals, through many centuries, by a multitude of authors, of every condition in life from prince to peasant, in every form of composition, and on a vast variety of subjects; yet the col-

lective result is a system of marvellous unity, self-consistency, and comprehensiveness. It is at the same time a system which is not self-centred and self-contained, but one of which all the parts contribute, each in its place, to raise, sustain, and guide faith in the coming of a mysterious and mighty Saviour—a perfect prophet, perfect priest, and perfect king, such as Christ alone of all men can be supposed to have been. This broad general fact—this vast and strange correlation or correspondence—cannot be in the least affected by any questions of “the higher criticism” as to the authorship, time of origination, and mode of composition, of the various books of the Old Testament: by the questions, for example, which have been raised as to whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch; whether its first book has been made up of a number of older documents; whether its legislation consists of various deposits or strata; whether the book of Deuteronomy is the work of Jeremiah; whether there was an earlier and a later Isaiah; whether the book of Zechariah is the work of several writers; whether Daniel was composed by the prophet whose name it bears or by a later author. Answer all these questions in the way which the boldest and most rationalistic criticism of Germany or Holland ventures to suggest,—accept on every properly critical question the conclusions of the most advanced critical schools,—and what will follow? Merely this, that those who do so must, in various respects, alter their views as to the manner and method in which the ideal of the Messiah’s person, work, and kingdom was, point by point, line by line, evolved and elaborated. There will not, however, be a single Messianic word or sentence, not a single Messianic line or feature, the fewer in the Old Testament Scriptures. The whole religion of Israel will just as much as before be pervaded by a Messianic ideal; and that Messianic ideal, however differently it may be supposed to have been developed, will be absolutely the same as before,—an ideal which can only be pretended to have been realised in Christ, and which may reasonably be maintained to have been completely fulfilled, and far more than fulfilled, in Him.

Such is the connection between Judaism and Christianity. It is a relationship which is not only remarkable, but unique.

Comparative theology cannot show a second instance of it in the religious history of humanity. Brahmanism was, indeed, a development of the Vedic religion; but no person has ever regarded it as a fulfilment of the Vedic religion. Buddhism was an offshoot of Brahmanism; but instead of being the completion of Brahmanism, it was an essentially antagonistic religion. The religion of Israel and the Christian religion are the only two faiths in the world which have been historically related as prophecy to fulfilment, hope to substance.

The wisdom of the classical world—a wisdom primarily and chiefly Greek, but considerably modified by the Roman mind, as well as by Eastern thought—must also be admitted to have had historically an influence on the rise of Christianity, although a feebler influence than that which it exerted for many subsequent generations on the development of Christian theology. The popular religions of Greece and Rome were too poor and fanciful, indeed, to contribute anything directly to the treasury of Christian truth; but, unlike some greater religions, such as Brahmanism and Buddhism, which overpowered and enslaved the soul, they allowed, and even signally favoured, a free, simple, and natural growth of the human mind. The consequence was the Greek and the Roman man,—the Greek an artist and philosopher, the Roman a conqueror and legislator,—but Greek and Roman alike fully conscious of superiority to the world, and in some large measure conscious of the divine in humanity. Hence the culture of the classical world was far superior to that of the Oriental world, and a magnificent preparation for the Christian faith, and for the world which rests upon it. The Greco-Roman intellect achieved marvellous successes in every sphere of activity, and not least in the highest spheres of thought. The tragedians of Greece had presentiments of truth so divine, expressed so clearly a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the need of expiation, and breathed forth so pathetically the longing for reconciliation, that they have not inaptly been called “the pagan prophets of Christianity.” The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle is not only a deeper and truer, but one might almost say a more Christian exposition of moral duties, than the generality of modern manuals of moral philosophy. When Plato taught that

the Idea of the Good is the source of all existence and intelligence, and that the Absolute Good is God, he was not far from the thought of Christ, "None is good save one, that is God," nor from the thought of St John, "God is love;" and although "Platonic love" was but joy in beauty, order, excellence, still the inculcation even of that was a notable approximation to the doctrine, "Love is of God, and every one that dwelleth in love is born of God and knoweth God." The thinkers of Greece, in discovering and developing all the arguments which reason can yet urge for the existence of God, are entitled to the credit of having first explicitly proved rational the truths assumed in the Scriptures as the very foundations both of Judaism and of Christianity. And in labouring to show that the whole heavens and earth depend on the Eternal Reason, they reached conclusions as to the self-revelation of that reason, which the Jewish thinkers of Alexandria could easily combine with the intimations of the Old Testament as to the "Word of the Lord" and the "Wisdom of God," and which were fitted to lead up alike to what St Paul taught of Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist," and to what St John taught of Him as "the Word made flesh, who tabernacled among men, so that they beheld in Him the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

This Greco-Roman wisdom spread into Palestine and the adjacent countries,—spread far as Roman conquest extended and Greek speech penetrated,—so that the atmosphere of thought and feeling which Christ and the Apostles breathed was much less purely Jewish, much less purely native, than that in which Moses, and the psalmists, and the prophets of ancient Israel lived. The spiritual change is reflected in the general difference of tone and character between the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. It is not, however, traceable in the form of definite thoughts, or sentiments, or expressions directly derived by the New Testament writers from classical authors. There was no borrowing of this kind. It was not thus that classical thought acted on Christianity in its conception. Christ and the Apostles are certainly not to be regarded as the students or disciples of Greek philosophers.

They were providentially so circumstanced that no one can reasonably suppose their teaching to have been based on Greek speculation, or reasonably deny that, while proceeding from a Jewish past, they displayed in setting forth a new religion the most marked originality. Greek wisdom influenced them only in the same general way in which German idealism or French positivism may affect the thoughts of an intelligent Scottish peasant, although he has never read a line, or even heard the names, of Hegel or Comte. But its influence is not to be inferred to have been unreal or inconsiderable, because it was vague and general. It exerted an indubitable historical influence, however difficult it may be precisely to determine what its particular effects were. At the same time, most superficial and erroneous is the notion that Christianity was only a product or compound of Jewish and Grecian forces and elements. Christianity is the religion which has the deepest and broadest historical foundation, and yet it is also the most original of religions, for it is essentially the manifestation and work of the most original of personalities. Christianity centres in Christ, and Christ's character had no pattern in actual history either heathen or Jewish, nor His mission any parallel in its grandeur and comprehensiveness. It is vain to attempt to explain them from any resources or by any peculiarities of the age in which He appeared.

Let us now come back, however, to the point from which we started—namely, the fact that Christianity has relations to all religions, and often most intimate and special relations to religions with which it has had little or no historical connection. How happens it that the religions of India and of China, of the Teuton and Scandinavian of Northern Europe, and of the Toltec and Aztec of Central America, can just as well be judged of from a Christian standpoint and in relation to the Christian faith, as the religions of Greece and of Rome? It can only be because Christianity is in a higher and broader than merely historical manner the centre of the system of the world's religions. All judgments and comparisons of the kind referred to would otherwise be arbitrary and unjust. Christi-

anity is, however, the ideal or spiritual centre of all religions in two ways, which only need to be indicated in order to explain why all religions look towards it, and can be most clearly seen and most fully comprehended in the light of it.

First, then, Christianity is the Absolute Religion, in the sense of the perfect realisation of the idea which underlies and gives significance to all religions. Religion is the communion between a worshipping subject and a worshipped object,—the communion of man with what he believes to be a god. It is a relationship which supposes both distinction and unity. Were there no distinction between the subject and the object, there could be no religion, whether the self-identical unity were named God or named man. Neither a relation of God to Himself nor of man to himself can be regarded as religion. On the other hand, were there only distinction between God and man, were they absolutely separate from and indifferent to each other, religion must be in this case also impossible. Religion supposes two factors, which are different yet related, so far distinct and so far akin, a Divine Being and a human being, the worshipped and the worshipper. And as a state of mind and life, it is the man's, the worshipper's, sense of relationship to, and dependence on, the Being whom he believes and feels himself bound to adore, to propitiate, and to serve. This is the generic notion of religion,—the idea of religion which applies to all religions, however rude and degrading, or however spiritual and ennobling. It applies to all heathen religions, for they all, without exception, contain some sort of honest belief in a power or powers regarded with awe and reverence. It applies to natural religion, which is the communion of man with God so far as God is discovered by man through the natural exercise of his faculties and from natural objects and events. It applies to revealed religion, which is the communion of man with God, as made known to him, immediately or mediately, through special supernatural manifestation. The rank and worth of a religion depend on the measure in which it approximates to the complete realisation of this idea. Christianity alone completely realises it. It alone shows us the whole grandeur and wealth of the idea. But for it our consciousness and

thoughts of religion must have necessarily been comparatively poor and meagre, one-sided and perverted. In and through it alone we see what religion really means; what, in order to answer fully to its own nature, it implies as to God and man, and the relationship between God and man. Because it thus alone presents religion to us at once as a reality and in its ideal perfection,—without error or one-sidedness, with pure and comprehensive truthfulness,—it is the absolute religion, the religion in the light of which and in relation to which all other religions must be viewed, if they are to be rightly and thoroughly understood.

Christianity, alone of religions, gives a clear, self-consistent, adequate view of God. It presents Him as the one God, eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient; as perfect in wisdom, in righteousness, in holiness; and yet as merciful, gracious, full of goodness and love; a true Father in His feelings and actings towards men; the God and Father of Jesus Christ, in whose character and sacrifice His moral glory has found the highest revelation of its purity and beauty, its attractiveness and tenderness. It, alone of religions, addresses itself to man as he really is, and in the whole extent of his being, overlooking no weakness, cloaking no sin, making no false concessions, yet denying no legitimate supports, and appealing in due order and degree to faith, reason, affection, and will. It, alone of religions, discloses and promises to man a complete communion with God. It shows the perfect union of the divine and human in the person and life of its founder. It offers, on the basis and surety of a divinely accomplished and divinely accepted atonement, full reconciliation with God to every one who will repent and turn from his sins. It demands that the whole soul and strength of man be devoted to God; and to render possible compliance with the demand, it enriches him with such internal gifts as the abiding presence of Christ within and the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, and with such external aids as the Scriptures, the Church, and sacraments. Christian communion with God should be inclusive of the whole receptive life of man, filling him with the peace, and love, and joy of God; yet equally inclusive of his whole active life, requiring con-



formity to every precept of the divine will and the exercise of every energy in the advancement of the divine kingdom.

The idea of religion which Christianity thus completely realises is present in every religion, and the more any religion embodies and expresses it, the higher and the better is that religion. No religion, however, but the Christian, nearly approaches to the complete embodiment and expression of it. Most religions are sadly defective as regards every element of the idea. All of them, with the one exception, err grievously as to some constituent or aspect of it. Those of them which excel most in one respect often fail worst in others. Yet none of them are wholly false or "without some soul of goodness," and in so far as any religion is true and good, it is akin to the religion in which the fulness of truth and goodness implied in the idea of religion has been realised, the absolute religion, founded by Him who, in the spirit not of narrow exclusiveness but of broadest inclusiveness, claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life."

A brief glance over the world of religions will illustrate what has been asserted. At the bottom of the scale a crowd of religions are to be observed, which have not been dealt with in this course of lectures, but which have had much attention drawn to them by the works of Lubbock, Spencer, Tylor, Waitz, and others. They are the religions of the type known as fetishistic or animistic. In these nothing is too mean to be worshipped, nothing more grotesque than the worship, and no end so capricious or selfish but that it may be sought to be attained through worship. It is always easy to see how wretchedly the divine is conceived of in them; how little conscious of his own true wants and of the worth of human nature is the poor worshipper; and how dark and gross, how uncomfoting and unelevating, are his attempts to gain the aid or avert the anger of the agents on whom he feels himself dependent. It is often difficult to bring one's self to acknowledge that there is any religion at all in these so-called religions. Yet religion there is, and not unfrequently much religion, unless we have greatly erred as to the notion of religion. There is a sense of nature being pervaded and of life being influenced by mysterious powers; a conviction

that in all things and events there is more than can be seen and touched; a practical faith in mind above and around man answering to the mind within him. Now, as he to whom "a primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose is and nothing more" can have no poetry in his nature, so he who believes that in wood and stone there is nothing more than what his eyes perceive and his hands grasp, or nothing more even than all that the chemist and mineralogist or botanist can tell him about them, has little piety in his soul; and if, as Christianity teaches, "in God we live, and move, and have our being," and "by Christ all things consist," the animist possesses truth which such a man ignores, and stands, in consequence, in closer relationship than he to the Christian faith. The vague, feeble, wayward gropings of the fetishist after communion with divine powers are not to be denied to be religious, nor denied to have affinity with what is deepest in religion. Many professed Christians, perhaps, if they had eyes to see and hearts to understand, might learn not a little from the fetishist. And certain it is that Christianity, although the highest of all religions, or rather just because the highest of all religions, can convince and convert the devotees of the very lowest religions, and thus speak peace and yield satisfaction even to the heart of the fetishist. As in art and literature the utmost perfection may be combined with the utmost simplicity, so is it in religion. The higher heathen religions, like the Egyptian religion, Brahmanism, and Buddhism, are essentially abstruse, and only capable of being intelligently apprehended by speculative intellects. But the absolute religion is so simple, clear, and plain, so adapted to the mind and heart of universal humanity, that the most degraded peoples can discern the force of its claims, and recognise in it the true response to what they were blindly feeling after in their fetishistic state.

Passing by, because of the limited time at our disposal, intermediate phases of polytheism, religions of a fully developed anthropomorphic type like those of Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia, present themselves. In these religions the gods have become completely human forms—magnified men and women. Hence the communion of the worshipper with the worshipped

is here, on the whole, cordial and familiar. It is a communion, however, which is weakened and divided because there are many competitors for homage; one in which reason has little share, and which the growth of reason tends to destroy; one which largely rests also on the sense of sin being imperfectly developed, so that the growth of conscience is as fatal to it as the growth of thought; one which cannot satisfy the more spiritual affections of the soul, and is very far from including a true ideal or law for practical life. Religions of this kind can rule the mind only in its youthful immaturity. But through eliciting and stimulating the free and energetic exercise of men's faculties they may do more for the progress of humanity than religions of a far more profound and serious character. The culture of Greece is the best vindication of the scheme of providence which included the religion of Greece. Without the gods of Greece the works of Phidias and Apelles, of Æschylus and Sophocles, would either not have been, or been very inferior to what they were. The Roman gods helped mightily to make those Roman men who conquered the world, and who still "from their urns" so largely rule the world through Roman law. The followers of Thor and Odin were stern and ruthless, but they were also free, fearless, enterprising—fit instruments for the destruction of the Roman world when it deserved to fall, and strong materials with which to build up the edifice of another and weightier world. Christianity has made Christendom, but it has made it because it could, without inconsistency, appropriate and utilise the culture of the Greek, the political intelligence of the Roman, the Saxon's love of liberty, the Norseman's enterprise and valour. It has dethroned alike the gods of Olympus and of Valhalla, but it has rejected nothing of good which grew up under their sway. Every germ of truth in those ancient pagan faiths may find a place, and every energy which gave worth to the lives of ancient pagan men may find scope, within the sphere of Christian thought or work.

In the Mazdean or Zoroastrian religion we have the best example of a dualistic faith. It conceived of morality as essentially a struggle in favour of Ormuzd, and consequently in favour of light, purity, and truth; and against Ahriman, and consequently against darkness, impurity, and falsehood.

It represented the struggle as hopeful, because not a struggle against existence itself, but simply against evil existence, and because Ahriman and his hosts were doomed to defeat. It afforded scope for a vigorous and manly virtue, man being supposed to have been created by the good God, and to have been placed, endowed with complete personal freedom, in the midst of the moral antagonism of the world, in order to combat the evil god and all his works. Its good points were its recognition of the reverence due to the holy will of the good God, its belief in a kingdom of God, and its hope in the triumph of good over evil. And Christianity has all these merits. Where Zoroastrianism manifestly and grievously erred was in confounding moral and physical good, moral and physical evil, in unduly extending the boundaries of evil, and in exaggerating the power of the Evil One. Christianity is free from all these faults. Zoroastrianism was, moreover, a meagre, rudimentary, undeveloped system; whereas in Christianity there is the fulness of truth and of grace.

The best example of a pantheistic religion is Brahmanism. It is as rich in thought as Zoroastrianism is poor. It has sprung from the most profound and earnest meditations on the nature of existence, on the absolute spirit, on the relation of the infinite and the finite, on reality and appearance, on life and death, on suffering and retribution. It has given rise to a vast and peculiar civilisation, to various systems of theology and philosophy, and to an abundant and remarkable literature. It is only of late that Christian scholars have applied themselves to a close study of its principles and doctrines. It may well be that they will find it to have much to teach them and more to suggest to them. It may well be that Hindu thoughts will yet modify considerably European views of religion, and even modify them for the better. But it is clear that however much truth there may be in Brahmanism, it is truth which must be consonant with the spirit of Christianity, and which that spirit can assimilate; whereas Brahmanism has so conspicuously failed to realise the idea of religion—or, in other words, to meet the requirements of a religion—that it is mere folly to think of it as a rival to Christianity. It conceives of God as so absolutely the One Being, that all finite objects, finite minds, and

finite interests are deemed illusions, and that not even moral distinctions are supposed to exist in Him or before Him. It denies to Him the intelligence, the freedom, the holiness, the love which can only be found in a person; indeed it denies to Him all definite attributes, and so leaves to be worshipped merely an empty abstraction, an infinite blank. It regards the worshipper's own consciousness of freedom and sense of responsibility as deceptive. It represents the loss of finite being, the absorption of the finite in the infinite, as the perfection and ultimate goal of communion with God. Such being the general idea of religion on which Brahmanism proceeds, it has necessarily fallen into the wildest speculative errors and led to the most deplorable practical consequences.

There are three religions to which it may suffice merely to refer, as showing that great success in certain respects does not preclude great failure in others. Buddhism, by its inculcation of charity, self-sacrifice, justice, purity, and all the passive and gentler virtues, and by the moral ideal which it presents as having been exemplified in the character and life of Buddha, far surpasses, on one most important side of the religious idea, all other heathen religions, and might be maintained to have left in that particular direction little or nothing in Christianity unanticipated. Yet it is Buddhism which represents God as a negation, all existence as irrational and vain, and the chief good as eternal nothingness.

In a somewhat different manner, Confucianism, which reflects and impresses so truthfully the mind of China, was also strong on its practical side. This ancient, singular, isolated nation has from the earliest time shown a most remarkable genius for accurate moral discernment. No nation in the world has displayed the same ability to perceive what was individually and socially, morally and politically right. Its plain, precise, common-sense mind has shown itself to singular advantage in the ethical sphere. There is probably not a single moral precept in the Christian Scriptures which is not substantially also in the Chinese classics. Almost every important principle in Bishop Butler's ethical teachings had been explicitly set forth by Mencius in the fourth century B.C. The Chinese thinker of that date had anticipated the entire moral theory of man's

constitution expounded so long afterwards by the most famous of English moral philosophers. But while China has in Confucianism a correct and detailed moral code, she has nothing to supply her great want,—the want of a worthy view of God. On the spiritual side this religion is defective in the extreme. Its god is almost a void, without depth or content, without will or affection. And hence, notwithstanding its admirable common-sense and equally admirable moral sense, China remains almost dead and immobile, with its heart and hopes buried in the past, not only not progressing, but not even dreaming of progress; a vast monument of the insufficiency of earth without heaven, of moral precepts without spiritual faith, of man without God; an instructive and impressive warning to Europe as to what any gospel of positivism may be expected to do for her.

As the Chinaman turns to the past, the ancient Egyptian turned with all his love and interest to the future. The present life he comparatively little esteemed—not, indeed, that he regarded it, like the Hindu, as illusory and vain, but because he contrasted it with a higher, and better, and fuller life, only to be realised in the next world. The Egyptians had a strong and steady sense of a divine and righteous government of the world, and a wonderfully firm and operative conviction of a future life dependent in character on personal conduct in the present. To have expressed this sense, to have maintained this faith, was the glory of the old Egyptian religion. But what a dark and dishonouring blot on the system which had such a merit was its debasing animal-worship! And what injustice was done to all the truths it contained by that abstruse and excessive symbolism which makes it of all religions the most enigmatic and impenetrable!

It is unnecessary to compare Christianity with the only two religions which agree with it in being manifestly and consistently monotheistic, Judaism and Mahommedanism; for the former was essentially and in all respects imperfect in itself and a preparation for Christianity, while the latter must be pronounced to have, on the whole, alike as regards its views of God and of man, of worship and of conduct, very seriously degenerated or retrograded even from Judaism.

Enough has now been said, perhaps, to indicate what is meant when we maintain that Christianity is the Absolute Religion, or has alone completely and harmoniously realised the idea of religion, present, indeed, in all other religions, yet always merely in some inadequate, undeveloped, deformed, or debased shape. All heathen religions contain some erroneous and evil principles among their essential tenets, and in so far as such is the case Christianity must be hostile to them. All heathen religions are defective and disproportionate, and therefore ought to give way before Christianity, which is complete and harmonious. All heathen religions comprise elements of truth, features of goodness, disclosures of God, means of spiritual life; and in so far they lead up to the absolute religion, the full-orbed faith, in which all rays of light are concentrated, and in which there is no darkness at all. Christianity as thus the absolute religion is a religion *sui generis*, a religion most unlike all other religions, and at the same time related and akin to all other religions, the religion around which all other religions in their better aspects group themselves to do it homage, "saying with a great voice, like the angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Secondly, the peculiar position of Christianity among other religions arises from its being the only religion which rests on a complete revelation. This is implied in its being the absolute religion. Absolute religion cannot rest on a partial or fragmentary revelation. Wherever there is religion there is revelation. Man does not know God by immediate vision, nor does God act on man by His absolute essence. God manifests Himself to the faculties of man through certain media. These constitute revelation, in that broad sense of the term in which it is the condition and correlative of religion. Thus understood, revelation is either general or special, for both general and special revelation come under the one idea of divine self-manifestation. Both imply that there is a God who makes known to His rational creatures His presence, character, and will. God Himself is the agent and object of both; He makes

known what would otherwise be unknown, and what He makes known is Himself.

General revelation comprises all objects which present themselves to the eyes, ears, and other senses; all minds, and those faculties of volition, intelligence, moral discernment, and affection, which make them images of God and enable them to reflect the features of God wherever displayed; and all the events of history, which is the manifestation of God in time, as the material creation is His manifestation in space. This vast book of general revelation lies open within the reach and in the presence of men in all lands and ages. It is an inexhaustible treasury of truth, and individuals and generations may always find in it what is new. Great stores of spiritual truth have already been drawn from it. Probably it is the source whence all the truth in heathen religions has gradually been derived. Evidence is wanting that these religions have been enriched through special revelation, although special spiritual influence may have opened the eyes of many wise and good men among the heathen to behold the wonders of God's law in creation and providence. The book, however, in which general revelation has been recorded is a difficult book to decipher and interpret. Material objects, mental experiences, and historical events have religious meanings, but not meanings which can be apprehended with much clearness or correctness by savage or barbarous men, by uneducated or unthoughtful men, or by any man whose heart is darkened and perverted by evil passions, and whose mind is not already largely possessed and enlightened by spiritual truth. The easiest volume of this book to read is that of physical nature; it is the volume from which the lower religions, the nature-worships, have been almost entirely drawn; and yet, although a volume undoubtedly full of wisdom and instruction, its characters are practically in an unknown tongue to the great majority of men. There may be "sermons in stones, and books in running brooks," yet to all but one in a thousand a stone is just a stone, and no sermon,—a running brook simply a running brook, and no book.

"One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach us more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can ;"



but only if we are ourselves sages,—otherwise it will probably teach us nothing.

It is not in the least wonderful that all the heathen religions should have often not only failed to read, but grievously misread the book of general revelation, or that not one of them should have found the key to its interpretation as a whole, or the right point of view from which to regard it. It is very wonderful that there should be a religion of which this cannot be said. And of Christianity it cannot be said.

As regards the physical world, obviously in even the highest forms of polytheism the divine is rather viewed as a revelation of nature than nature as a revelation of the divine. The gods have grown out of religious representations of the powers of nature, and are still considered as subordinate to and limited by nature. They are the revealers and not the revealed. The natural world is first; the divine world is second. Nor can nature be consistently and rightly accepted as a revelation of the divine by pantheistic faiths, for pantheism either identifies nature with the divine, or so confounds the natural and the divine that the divine is thought of as physical, and thereby degraded, or the world is absorbed or dissolved into the divine, and represented as an illusion. In all these cases nature is conceived of both as more and as less than a revelation, but not truly as a revelation. Christianity, however, takes its stand firmly and decidedly, as a fully developed monotheistic faith, which has appropriated the truth of Judaism, on the position that the universe is a creation of God's word, a manifestation of His mind, a disclosure of His eternal power and Godhead. It unreservedly accepts it as such, and thus makes nature's religious teaching also its own, and puts itself into a right relation to all physical science.

Then, as to the mental and moral constitution of man. There is little recognition in the lower forms of religion of there being any divine revelation in this volume. In Brahmanism man began to seek for God in thought; Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, discerned the divine chiefly in conscience, and hence have sometimes been classed as ethical religions; in Mahommedanism God was above all conceived of as absolute will, and in Judaism as a righteous will.

Christianity fully recognises the whole revelation of God in man, and represents the completion of the revelation of God as made through a perfect man. The religion of Greece tended to form artists, and that of Scandinavia warriors; Brahmanism is the religion of priests, and Buddhism of ascetics. But Christianity aims at the production of men, true and complete men, sons of God perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. It cannot aim at less, for, amidst all the sinfulness of men, it discerns also all the divine features and possibilities which are in him.

History is the volume of general revelation which the ethnic religions have most neglected. The two greatest of them—Brahmanism and Buddhism—do worse than ignore it; they take up a decidedly hostile attitude towards it, regarding salvation only as the escape of the individual from temporal limits and social ties. Mazdeism, in spite of its dualism, and its narrowness and meagreness of conception, was probably in this respect the least defective heathen faith. Judaism had its general doctrine of providence and its distinctive Messianic hope. But Christianity came to proclaim and found "the Kingdom of God," as the realisation of the purpose which had been running through the ages, as the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, and as destined to overspread and transform the whole earth. It came not merely to save men, but to regenerate and sanctify humanity. It identified the goal which it set before itself with the chief end of man and the final cause of history, viewing in the same light the fates of the mightiest nations and the events which befell the humblest individuals. It taught men to look in all past history for the evidences of God's sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and goodness, and to believe that from the time of Christ's incarnation, divine truth and grace would be traceable, working ever more mightily until all falsehood should be exposed, all evil expelled, the triumph of holiness and love complete, and the entire world laid as a trophy at the feet of Him who once wore a crown of thorns.

Christianity, let it be repeated, is the religion which alone has known to place itself in a perfectly right relationship to the whole general revelation of God. It does not keep aloof

from it, and still less does it oppose it. It is willing to conform to it, and to be judged by it, so far as general revelation extends. It cordially accepts it in all its length and breadth, confident that physical discovery, mental science, and historical research can find only what will prove an addition to its own wealth.

While Christianity, however, accepts the general revelation of God, it does not confine itself to it; on the contrary, it professes to be a special revelation, and consequently assumes the possibility, needfulness, and reality of special revelation. It is the task of the Christian apologist to exhibit fully what grounds there are for this assumption. Here it may be enough to say, first, that the fact that all the religions of heathendom have so seriously misunderstood general revelation, as they undoubtedly have done, seems of itself to show that a special revelation cannot reasonably be deemed unnecessary; and, secondly, that if any one, with awakened conscience, duly considers man's condition as a sinner—observes how little nature has to tell as to the way in which God will deal with sinners—realises how impossible it is to love God with any real, earnest, steady love, so long as we are conscious of being in revolt against Him—and marks how signally, how terribly, the heathen religions have erred in regard to the nature and means of salvation,—he will probably be little disposed to dispute the necessity of a special revelation, and he will certainly be in the only proper frame of mind to judge of the evidence which can be adduced for the reality of such revelation.

Special revelation may appear in two forms. The lower form comes first. God may manifest Himself by particular interventions amidst fixed laws, by visions and voices, by the inspired utterances of law-givers, psalmists, and seers; and the memory of His disclosures may be perpetuated in social ordinances, religious rites, or literary compositions. A revelation of this kind through words and institutions was what the Jewish economy claimed to be. Christianity admitted its claim. It abolished, indeed, the law so far as it was external, temporary, and superficial, substituting for it one which is

spiritual, eternal, and sufficient; but it transferred to itself all that was of permanent value in the Old Testament; educed out of its particular practices and statements the universal principles implied in them; provided in the work of Jesus Christ satisfaction for the religious wants expressed in its rites, symbols, and sacrifices; and shed a light over every page of the Hebrew Scriptures which should make them far more instructive and profitable to the Christian than they ever could be to the Jew. While the Gospel frees us from bondage to the letter of the older dispensation, it at the same time enables us to discover, with greatly increased clearness, the true significance of the revelation on which that dispensation rested.

What Christianity claims, however, as its own great distinction, is another and much higher form of special revelation. God's general revelation of Himself is by fixed laws of order which know no pity, which show no forgiveness, which are indifferent to the interests of individuals, which conceal the divine character in some respects while they reveal it in others. God's special revelation of Himself by intervening among these laws in miraculous acts and inspired words brings Him nearer to individual hearts, and yet it leaves Him far away; for after all but signs and sounds have been given, not Himself; He is Himself still shrouded in darkness, still hidden where no man can approach Him. Can He come yet nearer man that man may draw closer to Him? Christianity answers, and its answer is Christ,—the person, the character, and the work of Christ. The highest form of special revelation—the revelation which rests on all other revelation, and in which all other revelation is completed—the revelation which is the consummation of the whole process of the divine self-manifestation, and which brings with it the realisation of all that religion implies,—is, according to Christianity, revelation through a human person possessed of all human graces and virtues, and exhibiting in human conditions, in human action, and in human suffering, the divine love and sympathy. The perfect union of the divine and human in Christ—the fulness of the Godhead disclosed in perfect manhood,—to the end that, through the putting away of sin and the work of the Holy

Spirit, men may be not merely servants but sons of God, enjoying free and entire communion with Him, and living in a righteous and loving relationship to one another,—this Christianity puts forward as its central idea, and at the same time as historical fact. It is impossible even to imagine how in the domain of religion there can be anything higher or more perfect. It completes revelation. It founds the absolute religion. Henceforth there may still be unlimited spiritual progress, but it must be within the outlines of this revelation and on the basis of this religion. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.

The claim which Christianity makes for Christ is one which no other religion makes for its founder. Confucius is represented merely as a sage, Zoroaster and Mahommed only as prophets. Buddha alone can be set over against Christ as one deemed by his followers both God and man. But what a contrast! Do not these two great solitary figures rise up before us, as if to show how vast is the distance between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man? Christ—the God-man—God in infinite love and condescension taking upon Him human nature and becoming a human brother: Buddha—the man-God—with his vain and presumptuous boast of having raised himself to Godhead by his own power and knowledge. Christ revealing the Father: Buddha proclaiming that there is no Father, and that all existence is evil and vanity. Christ bringing life and immortality to light: Buddha setting forth only nothingness.

I must conclude, not at the close, but at the commencement of my subject. I have sought merely to introduce you into it; but I have sought to do so through what seems to me the main entrance, where a view is to be had of that general relationship between Christianity and other religions whence all their special relationships diverge. To follow up these latter—to attempt to explore the subject as a whole—is not work for a lecture, or for a series of lectures, but the appropriate task of a science, the great science of Comparative Theology. It is a science which is unfortunately cultivated by many who endeavour to make it yield anti-Christian and even atheistical inferences, but that is assuredly not due to

the real character of the study itself, but simply to the mental perversity of those individuals. The study itself is a magnificent demonstration, not only that man was made for religion, but of what religion he was made for. The more accurately the nature of religion is determined, the more thoroughly its various forms are studied, and the more closely they are compared, the more conclusively will it appear that Christianity alone is the ideal of all religion, and alone satisfies the spiritual wants of humanity; that Christ is "the desire of all nations," and the appointed Saviour of the world, in whom all perplexities of the soul are reconciled, and in whom alone the restless hearts of men can find peace. If it be true, on the one hand, that the ethnic religions can only be understood when viewed in relation to Christianity, it is also true, on the other hand, that Christianity cannot be fully understood unless viewed in relation to those religions. We must know what questions the human soul has been putting to itself in various ages, lands, and circumstances, and what are the answers which it has been giving to them, before we can appreciate aright the comprehensiveness and aptness of the response contained in the Gospel. Not one of the features or doctrines of Christianity will fail to appear in a brighter light, and with a diviner beauty, after they have been compared and contrasted with the correlative features and doctrines of other religions.

## XXVI.

### SOME REQUIREMENTS OF A PRESENT-DAY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS.<sup>1</sup>

BY a Christian Apologetics I mean a vindication of Christianity which aims at being thorough and comprehensive; one which includes the theory as well as the practice of the vindication, and which seeks not merely to defend some particular portion of Christianity, but to justify it as a whole. Christian Apologetics proposes to itself a distinctly practical end, victory over all doubt and disbelief as to the truth and excellence of Christianity; and it presupposes in the competent apologist an extensive and intimate knowledge of Christianity, and an adequate acquaintance with all the exegetical, historical, and theoretical disciplines of theology which contribute to such a knowledge of Christianity as is required for a conclusive and complete defence of it.

Christian Apologetics as thus understood is of comparatively recent origin. It is the natural and necessary outgrowth, however, of the history of Christian apology, and that may be justly traced back to the advent of Christianity itself. Christian apology is as old as Christianity. The prophecy of Simeon, spoken to Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel—*καὶ εἰς σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον*—and for a sign which is spoken against," was constantly verified in our Saviour's life-time; and so the task of self-vindication, by word and works, was laid upon Him as a considerable part of what was given Him to do. He was His own apologist.

The earliest preaching of the apostles was mainly apologetic, for it was mainly what St Luke calls it, "a preaching of *the resurrection*," the fact by which Christ was manifestly declared

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture delivered in St Mary's Cathedral, to the Edinburgh Diocesan Church Reading Union, on Wednesday, 22nd March 1899.

to be the Son of God, and by which the truth and success of His mission were infallibly sealed. The epistles, and still more the discourses, of St Paul are largely apologetic. Seeing that Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, he had to labour to show that He was in reality "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." All the evangelists had obviously, in the composition of their Gospels, an apologetic purpose to some extent in view. The key to the special character of the Fourth Gospel, for example, is probably to be found in the words (xx. 31): "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." They tell us that their author's record of the words and deeds of Christ was not meant to be a mere general biography, but had also expressly for aim to show that the man known by the name of Jesus was none other than the promised Messiah, and even the Incarnate Word.

The necessity of self-defence, of apology, imposed upon Christianity from the first has never ceased. Nor is there any prospect of its ceasing in the present state of being. We may even well doubt if it would be for its good to be freed from that necessity. The need of self-vindication seems to be for a true religion a beneficent necessity. Spiritual truth has nothing more to dread than passive, unintelligent acceptance. A faith very easily acquired is one which will be very easily lost, and which will not be of the highest character.

The continuous hostility which has been manifested towards Christianity may seem to some to be of itself a presumption against its truth. But it is really nothing of the kind; and, in fact, it is the immediate and inevitable consequence of its truth. The explanation of the aversion still displayed to Christianity is just the same as the explanation of the hostility manifested towards Christ Himself in the days of His flesh. Christianity is, like Christ, the Truth, and as such it makes claims which human nature can ill tolerate. As pure spiritual truth, it demands from man a clean heart and a right spirit, a humility and a piety, and a submission and obedience to the whole will of God, as revealed in Christ, which cannot but evoke resistance and enmity so long as man is what he is. So true



is this that we may safely say, that even were the whole world to become intellectually convinced of the truth of Christianity, and outwardly to profess the Christian faith, the need for a Christian Apologetics, although it would be greatly lessened, would not be wholly removed. There would no longer be required an apologetic of Christianity against avowed enemies, but there would still be required an apologetic against the doubts and prejudices which Christianity excites in the minds not merely of nominal Christians, but often even of those who are, on the whole, truly Christian men. It is chiefly, perhaps, such doubts and prejudices, deep-rooted in the natural heart, which give the preacher and pastor a practical interest in apologetics. They may seldom be called to be apologists against the avowed foes of the Christian faith, but they must have constant need to be apologists for that faith in the forum of the hearts of their hearers and people, and perhaps even of their own hearts.

Christian Apologetics is, however, of all the departments of Christian Theology the one which has been most influenced from without. It is the one which has necessarily varied most from age to age, and that for the simple reason that vindication must always conform itself to the character of the opposition. But the opposition to Christianity has never ceased, nor ever ceased to change from age to age, so that it has in course of time assumed every conceivable variety of form. Hence Christianity, claiming as it does sovereignty over all individual and social life, in every age and under all conditions, has had to vindicate itself anew to every new generation with special reference to its prejudices and anti-Christian tendencies. It has thus had to encounter successively all sorts of evil and hostile powers—wrong modes of thought, corrupt habits of life, despotic governments, anarchist schemes, false philosophies, sciences pushing themselves beyond their legitimate limits, rival religions, proposed substitutes for itself, or serious perversions of itself. The story of this conflict running through all the Christian centuries would, if worthily told, be of the highest interest. Probably no department of theology has a more instructive history than Christian Apologetics.

There will always be need for Christian Apologies as distinct from Christian Apologetics, seeing that there will always be partial attacks on Christianity, attacks on this or that particular Christian fact or doctrine, which need to be repelled. But in our late age of Christian history much more is needed. There are required vindications of Christianity as a whole; vindications against all really dangerous species and serious forms of assault; learned, thorough, and comprehensive vindications, capable of affording guidance and aid to partial apologetic labours, and at the same time accomplishing what these cannot effect. Such a Christian Apologetics is manifestly very specially needed at the present day. Now, as never before, what is most demanded in the way of Christian defence is far less to vindicate it against any particular charge or class of charges, than to vindicate its right to be regarded as the Absolute Truth, as the Divine disclosure in essentials of all that is required to sustain, purify, and perfect the human spirit. It is to show that Christ, and Christ alone, is "The Way, the Truth, and the Life," and can alone enable humanity to reach the Absolute Good—the realisation in itself and in the world of the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps it may seem as if a theological discipline which thus aims at being Christian warfare on a comprehensive scale, and conducted in a scientific spirit, and which deliberately assumes a sort of militant or strategical attitude towards philosophies, sciences, and schemes of individual life and social organisation, must be a bellicose sort of discipline, more likely to provoke than to do away with hostility. But no! Its real end is peace. And therefore it aims at clearing away misunderstandings and making unreasonable attacks impossible by showing the true relations between Christianity on the one hand, and philosophy, science, and practical life on the other. A scientific Christian Apologetics would set an example to, and would doubtless have a happy influence on, Christian Apologies. The authors of the latter are especially under temptations to do their work in a narrow and unfair manner. The more the thoroughness, comprehensiveness, and carefulness of science are introduced into Christian self-vindication, the more will it be freed from unchristian characteristics.

The remarks just made directly lead me to say that one manifest requirement of such a Christian Apologetics as is now more than ever needed is an absolute truthfulness of spirit which will meet the demands of an age that, professedly at least, admires scientific accuracy. It is all the more important to emphasise this, because the Christian apologist is necessarily in danger of forgetting it. Every apologist is. The desire to do the best he can for the cause or client he defends is apt to tempt him to a one-sidedness and exaggeration of statement wrong in itself, and likely to do harm, yea sure to do harm if the cause be wholly good, the client entirely innocent, so that cause and client stand in need of nothing except to be seen to be what they really are. The literature of Christian Apologetics—of the department of Christian study which has for its special aim the defence of Him who is the Truth—is unfortunately, however, just the kind of theological literature which is the poorest in manifestly truthful books; just the one which abounds most in works that at once excite suspicion as to their fairness. Perhaps Dr. Arnold spoke somewhat in his haste when he said that, with the exception of Hooker and Butler, there appeared to him to be “in all English divines a want of believing or disbelieving anything simply because it is true or false.” But the judgment is, I fear, more applicable to apologetic literature than to any other sort of theological literature. In English apologetic literature Butler’s “Analogy” is a unique phenomenon, owing to the perfection of intellectual truthfulness—the combination of caution and candour—which it displays. Were Christian apologists to follow the example set by the great and good Bishop Butler—would they only bring to their apologetic labours the self-denial and self-restraint appropriate to them—how much more really successful they would be.

Another requirement of such a Christian Apologetics as our age needs is that it should be thoroughly Christian. All theologians, I suppose, have now come to see that Christian Dogmatics must be Christo-centric. Christian Apologetics must be equally so. Christianity stands or falls with Christ. What Christ did not reveal or imply to be revealed the Christian apologist is under no obligation to defend. It is

through its relationship to the revelation of God in Christ that we are to view the revelation of God in physical nature, in the human spirit, in general history, in the religious experience of the race, and in Scripture. Knowledge of God flows through all these channels, and yet a knowledge of God as He really is, a view of Him in the unity, entirety, and glory of His character, is only to be attained by those who stand at the centre and summit of revelation, the manifestation of God in Christ. The significance of Christ's life, and the truth of what He made known as to God and man and their relationships, is essentially what a Christian Apologetics has to aim at making evident, and this aim it ought clearly to avow at the outset, and seek throughout to realise.

Christian Apologetics ought, therefore, it seems to me, to start with an exposition of the distinctive Christian view of Christ Himself and of His work and teaching, as being that which has to be vindicated. Whatever opposes itself thereto has to be met. Whatever is contrary to essential Christian truth, and only that, is the enemy with which the Christian apologist has to contend. For example, there is the Christian conception of God. It is Christ's own representation of God as the Father in Heaven, whose inmost nature is holy love, and who seeks the holiness and happiness of all His children. But there are other conceptions of God: those on which the ethnic religions rest, the conception given of God even in the Old Testament, seeing that it had so far the limitations necessarily inseparable from an initiatory revelation, the abstract and abstruse conceptions of God set forth by speculative philosophers, and the monistic or mechanical conceptions of God which an exclusive study of external nature has often suggested to physical scientists, and the like. Now, it is the idea of God in its distinctively Christian form—in other words, the idea of God as revealed through Christ—that the Christian apologist has to defend against all such other ideas as those referred to whenever they are put forward in competition with it. And the more faithfully the Christian apologist adheres to the distinctively Christian view, neither adding to it nor taking from it, the more easy will he find his task to be, the stronger his cause. There is no other idea of God so defensible as the

Christian idea. The same may be said of all other Christian ideas and disclosures. There is no system of belief which carries with it so much evidence of its truth as the Christian system in its original form.

With the requirement which has just been indicated there is another closely connected. A Christian Apologetics adapted to meet the wants of the present age cannot be one which proceeds on the dominant presupposition of the "evidentialists" of the last century and of a large portion of the present century; namely, the presupposition that the evidence for Christianity is, if not exclusively at least mainly, external criteria associated with its promulgation—physical sensible miracles, definite predictions of particular occurrences, and human testimony.

Those so-called evidentialists put forth all their strength in the attempt to prove, against Deists and rationalists, that reason was bound to accept all that is taught in the Bible, primarily and chiefly, if not entirely, because it had been adequately authenticated to be a Divine revelation by sensible miracles and definite predictions. They regarded what was most distinctive in it as consisting of mysteries which reason could not directly apprehend or deal with, but which it was bound to accept, whether it had any insight into their truth and meaning or not, on the ground of their having been sufficiently attested by special Divine interventions. Few, if any, of them may have left wholly out of account so-called internal evidence—the self-evidence or intrinsic reasonableness of the Divine oracles—but they laid comparatively little stress on it, and some of them even represented the appeal to it as presumptuous. Prodigious as the eighteenth century was in apologetic literature, it produced only one treatise of note on the internal evidence,<sup>1</sup> and it is said to have been suspected of being the work of a disguised enemy. Within the last half-century there has been a remarkable change of opinion in this respect. No theologian would now be regarded as a wise builder who attempted to raise a Christian Apologetics on the basis which the evidentialists

<sup>1</sup> Soame Jenyn's "View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion," 1776.

deemed to be alone worthy of confidence. Probably any book professing to treat of the evidences of Christianity under the two heads of *external* and *internal*, would at present have small chance of being read except by very old-fashioned persons.

The evidentialist view, it is seen, did great injustice to such a revelation as the Christian, and was, in fact, neither reasonable nor Christian. A revelation which presents mysteries as its substantive and distinctive message is a revelation which does not reveal, and belief in which is not belief in truth as such. Revelation is the manifestation of spiritual light, and spiritual light is what can be seen and felt by the spirit. There must, indeed, be mysteries involved in every form of revelation, as there is in every phase of existence, but the idea of a revelation consisting of mysteries which reason is shut up to believe in, yet has no real insight into, is an unwarranted and unworthy one, and most certainly does not correspond to the revelation given us in the Bible and through Christ. That revelation, rightly and comprehensively viewed, is gloriously self-evidencing, and its best apologists are necessarily those who see and help others to see most clearly that it is so. It is full of reason, and in essentials free from all unreasonableness; and it is the reasons in it, not reasons extrinsic to it, which constitute the strongest proof of its truth, and of its right to our acceptance and obedience. The evidentialists, therefore, certainly erred seriously when they separated, to the extent which they did, the proof of Christianity from its substance and content; when they went so near to the identification of merely historical belief with distinctively Christian faith, and rested in so large a measure their hopes of making men Christians on external proofs, which could not bring the human spirit into any direct and immediate contact with the Divine truth necessary to the maintenance of its religious life.

The Christian apologists of the present day do well to avoid the error of the evidentialists; a too exclusive reliance on arguments which tend merely to prove the credibility of the Biblical records by their accordance with external criteria and historical testimony. But they do, it seems to me, the reverse of well when they fall back into the error of the Deists—the error

which the evidentialists justly, and for the time successfully, combated—the illusion that Christian faith is quite independent of historical facts and probable evidence. And that is just what not a few are again doing. They treat the evidentialist attitude of mind towards Christianity as entirely erroneous, instead of only partially so. They represent Christianity as so self-evident, so absolutely certain, to intuition, or feeling, or faith, that reasons or arguments, and especially all weighing of probabilities, are irrelevant to it. Such is the view which has again, after a long interval of discredit and obscurity, become prevalent and popular. It is one which an eloquent speaker or skilful writer may make to seem very plausible, and even get credit for as novel and original, although in fact it is only the old delusion of Deism set forth in fashionable phraseology.

The erroneousness of this view lies in what it overlooks; the essentially complex nature of Christian truth, the indissoluble connection between the ideal and the real in Christian truth. Christianity is a wonderful and glorious fact as well as a sublime and ennobling ideal. While a spirit—the spirit of righteousness, purity, and charity—it is by no means a disembodied spirit. It centres in the God-man, in a unique person, in a history of real redemptive acts. Its ideas are, in a sense, facts with a history; and its facts are media of ideas and sources of spiritual life. Bishop Westcott, in a fine chapter of a very precious work, “The Gospel of Life,” declares Christianity to be “the only historical religion,” and quite successfully proves it, I think, in the sense in which he uses the words. Christianity is, alike in its antecedents, essence, and realisation, *historical* as no other religion can be said to be. For in Christianity, Christ Himself is what is most essential; it is in His own person and character, His deeds of power and mercy, His death for the remission of sins, His resurrection, ascension, and continued agency through the Spirit, and, in a word, in facts, transactions, and experiences, that His Gospel centres. But a religion thus historical can by no means be indifferent to historical evidence. It is vain to tell those who put their trust in such a religion that they should separate “the eternal truths of the spirit from the contingent truths

of history"; drop the latter, and adhere only to the former. For that is to assume that only a perishable importance attaches to the historic, a merely casual worth to the peculiar essence of Christianity. And such an assumption a Christian cannot admit. Christ, far from being of transitory significance in Christianity, gives to it its abiding and inexhaustible value and vitality. A faith, therefore, which does not so lay hold of Himself as to embrace the historical as well as the ideal in the Gospel, is no more Christian faith in its truth and entirety than that which rests on the historical alone.

Next, a Christian Apologetics ought in the present day to be scientific, to the extent at least of being built on a scientific foundation. Let us see what this implies.

Christian Apologetics has for end the defence of Christianity. But Christianity can only be defended in so far as known. One source—by far the chief source—of a knowledge of Christianity is the Scriptures. Christian Apologetic must, therefore, found largely on knowledge of Scripture. On knowledge of Scripture, however, in what form? I affirm on such knowledge in its most scientific form; which just means that Christian Apologetics should not build on unproved assumptions as to either the character or contents of Scripture; that it should be as little assumptive as possible, *assumptive* being equivalent to *unscientific*.

What are the obligations thereby imposed on the Christian Apologist so far as Scripture is concerned? One such obligation is a readiness to accept the results of all truly scientific, strictly objective and impartial, purely critico-historical investigations as to the age, authorship, credibility, &c., of the documents which are the sources of our knowledge of Christianity. The Christian Apologist ought not to cling to any views inconsistent with such results because they happen to be traditional or prevalent, or to have been long his own. He should fully acknowledge the rights of the kind of investigation referred to, recognise that without it neither the ideas nor the facts distinctive and constitutive of Christianity can be ascertained in a completely satisfactory manner, and thankfully accept whatever conclusions it seems to him to have



established. Such critico-historical investigation is merely a preliminary indeed, yet it is an indispensable preliminary to a scientific Christian Apologetics; and whoever would effectively contribute to the building up of a scientific Christian Apologetics must make himself sufficiently acquainted with Biblico-critical research to be able intelligently to appreciate and apply both its processes and conclusions.

Another obligation, however, is implied. The Christian apologist is bound, in his study of the content of Christianity, with a view to its defence, to follow the appropriate scientific method. There is such a method. It is one which has been gradually ascertained, and the ascertainment of which has in the present century created a new and most important department of theological science—what is called Biblical Theology. Now, it is on such a knowledge of the teaching of the Christian Scriptures as a correct Biblical Theology will give that the Christian apologist ought to found. There are no assumptions in a knowledge of the kind. The method by which it is obtained is the method common to all careful study of the contents of works of literature. Biblical Theology does not attempt to give any other truth than that of exposition, but it reaches and exhibits that truth with scientific thoroughness and impartiality. It does not set forth the ideas which it presents as true in themselves, but only as truly in the Bible; it aims at doing no more than giving a true account of what are the religious ideas in the Bible, of how they are related as set forth in the Bible, and of what their history has been, so far as that can be ascertained. But that is just what is most indispensable to the Christian apologist who would proceed according to a right method. His first want is a knowledge of the nature or content of Christianity derived from the Christian Scriptures, in a way the scientific legitimacy of which cannot be called in question.

So long, however, as Biblical Theology, in the modern sense of the term, did not exist, and theologians were without almost a conception of the method on which it proceeds, there was, of course, no sufficient response to that prime want of the Christian apologist, and it was only natural that he should build largely on the conclusions of some variety or other of

Christian Dogmatics, instead of directly on the essential content of the Christian Scriptures appropriately ascertained. In this respect a Christian apologist of our day has an immense advantage over his predecessors. He does not require to start with human dogmas or a questionable method; he can start with what even those whom he is about to oppose cannot deny to be truly Scriptural and Christian. He finds himself at the outset in possession of a knowledge of Christianity immediately, yet scientifically, drawn from its records; a knowledge independent of any dogmatic system, yet a knowledge of the Christianity of Christ and His apostles, of Christianity in its New Testament form; in a word, he finds himself in possession of a really satisfactory knowledge of that which is precisely what he requires to vindicate. The more purely, the more exclusively, he confines himself, in the first instance at least, to that which he thus knows, the greater, I hold, will be his success in every way, and the greater even will be the ultimate service which he may render to Christian Dogmatics.

In order scientifically to base a Christian Apologetics on Scripture, the apologist, I must add, has no need of going to Scripture with any preconceived theory as to the nature of its inspiration. It is enough for him that it is the chief source, and to a large extent the one source, of a knowledge of ideas and facts of supreme importance for mankind; of a knowledge of what he recognises to have been the most wonderful and the most gracious of all God's revelations of Himself to His rational creatures. It is its essential content which gives the Bible its unique value to the Christian apologist; and to gain a knowledge of that he needs to study the Bible through no extraneous theory. The more directly and ingenuously he goes to it the better.

The Bible itself, however, quite clearly shows us that there is a great deal in the Bible which is not sanctioned by the Bible, and that all that is in the Bible is not of equal value. The New Testament claims to be better than the Old. Much in the Old is abrogated by the New as inconsistent with the Gospel. The sentiments expressed in some of the imprecatory psalms and Hebrew war-songs incorporated—and to our advantage and for our instruction incorporated—in the Bible, are no

more to be cherished by Christian men than the patriarchal practice and Mosaic legislation as to polygamy and slavery are to be followed. The germs of all New Testament teaching may be discovered in the Old Testament ; but there was nothing perfected in the Old Testament. All perfection came through Christ. And whatever of the Old Testament has not been taken up into the New Testament ; whatever in it was allowed by Christ, and those whom He sent forth inspired by His Spirit, to pass unsanctioned ; we are not called on, as Christian apologists, to defend. The Bible is a whole unified, and vivified by the Word of God which pervades it ; but that Word is not to be indiscriminately identified with all the words which are in the Bible. The apologist who undertakes to maintain the inerrancy of every statement in the Bible undertakes a task obviously different from the defence of Christianity, and vastly more difficult.

The Christian apologist requires to distinguish between the letter and the spirit even in regard to the words of Christ and of the apostles. He has no right to treat what they enjoined on certain persons in certain peculiar circumstances as literally and strictly incumbent on all persons in all circumstances. He must distinguish between the circumstantial and the essential, the individual or special and the universal, in their teaching. He must not rest in the letter, but must enter into the spirit of the words contained in the New Testament. Otherwise he will do injustice to the Christian faith and give advantage to its adversaries.

The Christian apologist, then, should found on the revelation conveyed by the Bible as a whole—the revelation of the glory and grace of God and of the mind and spirit of Christ therein. That is the revelation which it is the one great distinctive aim of Christian Apologetics to vindicate. Any one who sees this clearly will find it easy to show that a multitude of the objections which are urged against the Bible in detail are so irrelevant and weak, when regarded as a disproof of the Bible as a whole—*i.e.* its essential spiritual content—as to prove merely the inconsiderateness of those who urge them.

The truth that the Christian Apologetics which our age re-

quires is one distinctively and thoroughly Christian, must not, I have to remark next, be so understood as to imply that a Christian Apologetics can afford to disregard any serious attack directed against Christianity from any quarter. This is laid down in opposition to an error which the school of Ritschl has done much to foster. The members of that school must be credited with having rendered service to Christian Apologetics by insisting on the reality, importance, and self-evidencing power of what is specifically Christian in theology. They have seen very clearly what, plain as it is, has sometimes been overlooked, namely, that Christianity when endeavouring to defend itself must not efface, disguise, or disown itself. When Christianity is summed up in some Hegelian formula, and a plea for the formula is substituted for a defence of Christianity, the latter will gain little even should the plea be brilliantly successful. If, in order to prove the truth of Christianity, a professedly Christian apologist argues as if Christianity were not itself, not the religion of redemption and of the kingdom of God founded by Christ, but metaphysics, philosophy, positive science, sociology, ethics, or some ideal or dream of his own, he thereby in reality gives away, injures, and practically betrays the cause which he undertook to defend. The Ritschlians have avoided such errors, but they have fallen into another almost as great when they pretend to possess or demand from others a Christian faith so exclusively drawn from the revelation of God in Christ, and so self-sufficing and self-certifying as to be independent of all objections to it which natural reason, ordinary knowledge, science, or philosophy can suggest.

To attribute such an independence as that to Christianity—to represent it as so separated and isolated from all other truth—is not to honour and benefit it, as the Ritschlians have supposed, but is to do it grave injustice. Christianity makes no claim to such an immunity from attack as they would give it; and it has no need of it. The truth as it is in Christ is not a truth peculiarly abstracted and dissociated from all other truth, but pre-eminently the truth to which all other truth tends as its centre or goal. Truth in every form is intrinsically favourable to Christianity. That holds good of no other religion. Falsehood in every form is unfavourable to it. That,

too, can be said of no other religion. All false philosophy, false metaphysics, and science falsely so-called, is necessarily hostile to Christianity; and a Christianity true to itself can have no wish to be secured against the hostility of what is false. It needs to fear no foe, and can only come forth strengthened from struggling with the strongest assailants. It has gained immensely in wealth of knowledge, in strength, and the consciousness of strength, through having had to test the exaggerated pretensions and combat the exorbitant claims of foes and rivals.

Instead of its being desirable to attempt to withdraw Christian thought and belief from contact or companionship with philosophic inquiry and speculation, as the Ritschlians would have us to do, it is a very important part of the work of a Christian Apologetics to show how Christianity is related to both true and false philosophy.

In true philosophy it has a friend and an ally. We may even, I believe, go much further, and maintain that true philosophy and true Christianity are both occupied, although in different ways and with different ends, with the same truth, the same object. The philosophy of the present age generally prefers, and for intelligible enough reasons, to name that object not God, but the Absolute. The absolute of philosophy, however, will only be found to satisfy even the speculative reason when apprehended as essentially identical with the self-existent and self-revealing Triune God of Christian faith. Rational Philosophy and Christian Theology, at their highest and best, are coincident and accordant. Each bears witness not only to itself, but also to the other. It would be an evil day for both were they wholly dissociated. But that day is never likely to come. They have never in Christendom been seen apart. Is it not now impossible even to conceive of them apart?

It is only in false forms of philosophy that Christianity has adversaries; only in philosophies which oppose to the Christian view of God and the universe an agnostic, materialistic, pantheistic, pessimistic or other anti-Christian creed. The Christian apologist is bound to combat such philosophies. Were he, when in the name of philosophy a doctrine is propounded as entitled to displace the Christian faith, not to challenge the

claims of that doctrine, he would practically disown the Christian faith. And why should a Christian apologist hesitate to attack an anti-Christian philosophy? To combat a false philosophy is to fight for the true. And philosophy, even as it has appeared at its best, cannot reasonably pretend to have a higher truth, a higher authority, a higher certitude, a higher value than Christianity. Speculative philosophy is much more the subject of internal contradiction, and of external distrust, than Christian doctrine. None of the great problems with which it has been always occupied have yet been solved, none of its chief antagonisms harmonised. It may be doubted if, apart from theistic truth, there is much that is sure and solid in what passes for metaphysics; while there is certainly much in it that is very dubious and nebulous. Yet there are not a few who confidently declare, on no better authority than that of a crude metaphysics, that Christianity has no right to existence; that all belief in God must be illusion, seeing that the Divine is unknowable; that all certitude is confined to sense; that a revelation is impossible; that a miracle is incredible and unprovable; and so on. Those who, under the guise of philosophers, thus dogmatise, may be very foolish and superficial individuals, but they find hearers and readers, believers and admirers; and it would be unwise and unsafe to leave the dogmas of what they call their philosophy uncontradicted.

Not less incumbent on a Christian Apologetics at the present day than the task which has just been referred to, is that of carefully tracing the natural relations between the positive sciences—physical, mental, and historical—and Christianity; of showing that the various kinds of supposed antagonism between those sciences and Christianity have arisen entirely from unfortunate misunderstandings, due to the unwisdom either of scientists or of Christians, or of both; and of making apparent that Christianity may fairly claim to supplement science in important respects, and can unquestionably perform certain inestimable services to humanity which science plainly cannot.

A truly Christian view of the world cannot be opposed to a really scientific view of it. The world with which Christian faith is concerned is just the world which God has made, just

the world as it actually is, and as genuine science shows it to be; the very same world, although that world, regarded as a medium through which the God revealed in Christ to men as their Father and Redeemer, also manifests to them His attributes, supplies their wants, and conducts their education. Whoever would hold a Christian view of the world must be ready to accept in its entirety the scientific view of it. He is no more free to reject the conclusions of the physical and mental sciences regarding the physical and mental worlds, in any case where those conclusions have been properly reached, than to reject the legitimately attained conclusions of Biblical Criticism, Biblical Hermeneutics, &c., as to the Bible. The conclusions of the former sciences are the most accurate and reliable findings of the human mind as to the data of a theology based on Nature, just as those of the latter are of a theology drawn from Scripture. In both cases alike all reasonings of the theologian which disregard or reject those data are, *ipso facto*, condemned. A conflict between the results of those sciences and the findings of theology is thus simply inconceivable. It would be for theology equivalent to self-contradiction; a conflict between its data and its conclusions. Belief in an essential antagonism between Christian theology and positive science necessarily implies confused thinking in those who entertain it.

Yet the belief is very prevalent, and is the source of much religious scepticism. For its prevalence, and the scepticism to which it gives rise, we may frankly admit that theologians themselves have been largely responsible. They have often assumed very wrong attitudes towards science. They have discouraged, depreciated, and persecuted it; have sought to restrict its rightful freedom of research, to dictate to it what it should teach, and to oppose to it the Bible as an authority on questions as to which it has no authority, and which cannot possibly be answered *biblically*, but only according to the methods of the special sciences. While that, however, may go far to account for so many people readily believing religion or theology to be essentially antagonistic to science, it does not in the least justify their belief. The notion is none the less a crude error into which it is disappointing to find any

man of real intellectual distinction fall, as sometimes unfortunately even such men do fall.

Let us take note of two examples. An eminent American scientist, the late Prof. J. W. Draper, wrote a well-known book expressly on "The Conflict between Religion and Science," and another, of much greater importance, on "The Intellectual Development of Europe," equally pervaded by the idea of an essential antagonism between religious faith and scientific inquiry. It seems strange that he should not have seen that his central conception or fundamental thesis was absurd; that he might as well have undertaken to prove that there had been a continuous conflict between science and industrial labour, or between science and æsthetic culture, or between science and moral conduct; that there cannot, in the nature of things, be inevitable contradiction between any kind of real knowledge and any kind of normal activity, physical or spiritual. No wonder that, with such an irrational dogma as his fundamental assumption, he was reduced to have recourse to an almost continuous identification of *science* with *true science*, rightly regulated and successful investigation, and of *religion* with *false religion*, blind and servile faith. Such a procedure is manifestly unfair and fallacious, and may justly be held to have made alike the polemic of Draper against religion and his attempt at historical generalisation quite inconclusive.

Another eminent American, Mr Andrew Dickson White, formerly President of Cornell University, not long ago representative of the United States at St Petersburg, and now their representative in Berlin, has recently written a work, entitled "A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom." It is far more elaborate, and in every way far more valuable than Draper's "Conflict between Religion and Science." It is prodigiously learned, and, so far as I can judge, is very rarely inaccurate as regards the statement of facts. I know of no book, indeed, nearly so likely to be useful to a theologian desirous of acquiring clear ideas on the relations of science and theology. And yet the author's own ideas on the subject seem to me very far from clear indeed.

He does not, one is happy to perceive, regard the struggle, like Draper, as one between science and religion. No candid



reader or honest critic will attribute to him hostility to religion. His treatment of Christianity is sympathetic and reverent. In his eyes the struggle is one between science and theology. That struggle, however, he represents as having gone on throughout the whole history of Christendom, and as having entered into every department of inquiry; and he depicts theology as having been always and everywhere the enemy of science, unjustifiably assailing it, arresting for a time its beneficent progress, thereby invariably causing the direst evils both to religion and science, and in the end always suffering defeat. From its commencement to its close the work is occupied exclusively with what is supposed to be historical proof of the correctness of that view.

Considering what the view is, and how largely the truth or falsity of it must depend on what is meant by "theology," Mr White ought surely to have made some endeavour to ascertain how the term ought to be applied. That he has unfortunately not done. He has not devoted even one of his more than eight hundred pages to the consideration of what "theology" means or ought to mean. Instead he, without any appearance of reason or attempt at justification, identifies "theology" with "dogmatic theology," and "dogmatic theology" with a "theology based on biblical texts and ancient modes of thought"; in other words, he arbitrarily elects to mean by theology an effete form of a single theological discipline, contrasts such theology with genuine science of every kind, and describes *their* opposition as "the warfare of science with theology." Going to work in that way he has, of course, as utterly failed to show that there is any necessary or natural "warfare between science and theology" as Draper failed to prove that there is any such "conflict between science and religion."

What Mr White represents as theology is, in reality, only theology of an ultra-conservative and uninquiring kind—the unprogressive theology of men incapable of doing justice to ideas and truths which are new to them. He has had in the course of his life to fight a good fight in the cause of educational progress and the freedom of science against a theology of that kind and theologians of that type. And the error

into which he has fallen is to have unduly generalised his own experience, and identified theology of a crude and unenlightened kind with theology itself. There are, however, men in America who have had to fight a battle as severe as his own against the same sort of theology and the same class of theologians, and who have fought it as theologians and in the interests of theology. Those men have equally fought for progress, freedom, and science, and yet not ceased to be theologians. That fact might of itself, I think, have sufficed to prevent Mr White from concluding that throughout the whole history of Christendom there had been a continual struggle between science and theology.

It might even have suggested to him that that was not the real struggle at all; that the real struggle was simply between obscurantism and enlightenment, knowledge and ignorance, candour and prejudice, obstinate adherence to old errors and readiness to accept new truths. That struggle has run through all ages and through all Christendom. It may be traced in every region of thought and department of science, and in none more clearly than in theology. Even within so-called "dogmatic theology" there has always been a conflict between science and dogmatism. "Dogmatic theology" itself should aim at being scientific. The "dogmatic theologian" ought not to be a theological dogmatist in the ordinary conversational meaning of the term dogmatist, but the cultivator of the special department of theology called "dogmatic theology," one which no enlightened theologian will admit to be correctly described when said to be "based on biblical texts and ancient modes of thought," or desire to see studied in any other spirit than the humble and truthful spirit of science.

In a word, the facts adduced by Mr White, numerous, accurately stated, and instructive as they are, afford no evidence of a warfare of *science per se* with *theology per se*. They are all instances illustrative merely of *the law of progression by antagonism*—of the growth of wisdom and order through the conflict, counterpoise, and co-ordination of divergent tendencies—and if Mr White had formed a clearer conception of that law, he would not have confounded it with, or formulated it as, a warfare of science with theology.

While constrained, however, to pass this judgment on his work, I do not consider that the fullest acceptance of it as warranted need lessen to any great extent any one's estimate of the excellence or value of the work. It is a work written in a most attractive style, comprehensively planned, carefully elaborated in every section, and filled with a marvellous wealth of varied yet always relevant learning. The spirit which pervades it is generous, and the services which theologians have rendered to the sciences are exhibited in it with candour and impartiality. And it certainly proves more conclusively and persuasively than had ever been done before the great practical conclusion which its author had chiefly at heart to establish and enforce. No intelligent reader can rise from the perusal of it without having his conviction of the folly and perversity of all interference with science in the supposed interest of religion deepened, and his confidence that untrammelled scientific investigation will only benefit religion as well as science increased.

The fact, however, that as regards the general relations of science and theology a man like Mr White shows the same haziness and confusion of vision as Dr Draper had shown regarding those of science and religion, is surely of itself evidence enough that a Christian Apologetics is needed which will clearly and adequately exhibit what the relations of science, religion, theology, and Christianity really are.

All that I have been saying suggests the further reflection that a Christian Apologetics suited to the wants of the present day must occupy itself with a variety of topics which received little or no notice from the apologetic writers of earlier times. The Christian apologists of those times could not only afford to ignore, but could not be expected to feel the need of a number of inquiries which all who now attempt to present any comprehensive vindication of Christianity must feel bound to institute. They could get more rapidly and directly to the discussion of the question, Is Christianity what it claims to be, or is it not? than we can. They could without challenge proceed almost at once to maintain the affirmative on the strength of the evidences attached to the special revelations on which it was held to rest. That their successors can no longer do. To

proceed so in the present state of philosophical and religious thought would show extraordinary ignorance or disregard of the difficulties and the wants of the vast majority of the incredulous and the inquiring whom the Christian apologist has now to endeavour to confute and convince. In other words, a Christian Apologetics such as the present age requires is under the necessity of dealing with not a few questions which, although they may fairly, perhaps, be regarded as simply preliminary or introductory, are all of real, and some of them of decisive, importance. It must begin with an adequate discussion of such underlying or fundamental problems.

Let me briefly indicate some of those problems, or rather groups of problems. (1) There are all the questions relative to the necessity and importance, distinctive nature and aims, proper position in the theological system, correct limits, true spirit and appropriate methods of Christian Apologetics. Some of those questions may be of little more than academic interest, but others are of general and very considerable importance. So much depends, for example, on the spirit in which Christianity is either advocated or resisted that a clear and reasonable statement of the way in which the claims of Christianity should be either presented or examined ought certainly to be found in every Christian Apologetics. So a great deal also depends on whether Christian apologists are content that their apologies should be simply Christian, or will not be satisfied unless they are also confessional. In the latter case they will be drawn into ecclesiastical polemics, and that can hardly fail to lessen the effectiveness of their vindication of the common faith of Christians as set forth in Scripture. It is desirable, I think, to keep Christian Apologetics and Churchly Polemics apart, and as a Christian apologist to aim only at the vindication of what is of the very essence of Christianity.

(2) A Christian Apologetics should not fail to do justice to its own history, and to show the real character and significance of the conflict between Christian faith and its antagonists. Its history is often greatly misrepresented; often so described as to give the impression that Christianity, in its struggle with secular and hostile powers, had been steadily losing ground; that each successive stage of the struggle had ended with a

result unfavourable to the faith, and indicative of its eventual extinction. Were it so, there could be no stronger argument against Christianity, and hence the Christian apologist should show, as he convincingly may, that that anti-Christian reading of history is a very erroneous one, and that, in reality, Christian faith has steadily grown in self-knowledge, in clearness of vision, in vitality, in range and power of influence for good, through its contact and conflicts with the world and its forces. "The earth," to use the words of the seer of Patmos, has "helped the woman." The world, alike through its good and evil, alike through co-operation and antagonism, has been made subservient to the welfare of the Church, and the progress of the Kingdom of God.

(3) As the object which Christian Apologetics seeks to vindicate is Christianity itself in its essential integrity, obviously one of its tasks is to exhibit the main features, the distinctive peculiarities, the chief doctrines, and cardinal facts of Christianity, in such a way as will most clearly and truthfully show its real character. The best Christian Apologetics must be the one which most fully proceeds on the principle that Christianity is its own best vindication. That the defence of Christianity is essentially its self-defence, and that the attention alike of those who defend and of those who resist it ought to be especially concentrated on what it is in itself, should be made apparent from the outset in every Christian Apologetics. How Christianity may be best represented with reference to the requirements of a Christian Apologetics is not merely a problem but a complex of problems.

(4) There are questions to answer as to the nature of religion, and of Christianity as religion. Christianity is religion both as a subjective and objective fact; both as personal piety, a special form of individual spiritual life, and as an historical reality and factor of a definite kind—a religion among religions. But that is of itself sufficient to condemn it in the opinion of many theorists, scientists, and other men of the present day, who have imbibed antitheistic principles and irreligious sentiments. In the departments of anthropology, sociology, and history of religions, for example, a host of books have appeared within the last twenty years representing all religion

as superstition, all piety as abnormal and diseased feeling, all religious doctrines as illusory beliefs, all religious institutions as being gradually outgrown and inevitably doomed to extinction, and Christianity as in no essential respects a unique religious phenomenon with supreme and exclusive claims on the human reason, heart, and will. It is manifestly incumbent on Christian apologists to examine the presuppositions, generalisations, and arguments from which such conclusions have been drawn, to show wherein they are erroneous, and to indicate what religion and Christianity really have been, are, and are ever likely to be, in the mind and history of man.

(5) All questions as to religion lead to questions as to revelation. Religion so far as true rests ultimately on general or special, natural or supernatural, revelation. Man knows God only so far as God makes Himself known to man. Hence a Christian Apologetics has in its preliminary work to treat of the general idea of Divine self-revelation, of the distinctive nature of its media or forms, the springs and channels of spiritual truth, of their inter-connection, and their relationship to the crowning revelation through Christ. Christian Apologetics should be broad-based on Divine truth. It should take its stand on, and draw its resources from, the whole process of the self-revelation of God, which in the fulness of time reached mankind in and through Christ, and is still with us in its records and results, and in the teaching and working of the Holy Spirit. The God revealed in Christ is the God who is also revealed in physical nature, in the consciousness and conscience of men, in the providential government of individuals, in the history of nations, and in Scripture. The self-revelation of God is the most general form of Divine activity, inclusive of creation, history, and redemption, and so centering in Christ that all Divine revelation is "yea and amen" in Him. And it is on revelation thus understood—a revelation inclusive of all Divine facts and utterances as ascertained and interpreted in accordance with the requirements of physical, mental, historical, and Biblical science—that a Christian Apologetics should be founded in order satisfactorily to accomplish its work, the defence of Christianity.

(6) Holy Scripture as a medium of Divine revelation has

peculiarities which raise questions that call for special consideration in a Christian Apologetics. There are, for instance, contrary extremes of error regarding it which require to be examined and disposed of. Some affirm its absolute inerrancy and infallibility even in regard to matters clearly within the provinces of criticism, historical research, and positive science. That, however, is to make for it a claim which it has nowhere made for itself, and which it is impossible to substantiate. Others deny to it the supreme normative authority and unique spiritual value which rightfully belong to it as the vehicle of the special Divine revelation that reached its consummation in the redemptive work of Christ. It is necessary to make apparent in what respects they also err. Further, it is especially in connection with the revelation transmitted to us in the Bible that there is a call on the Christian apologist to show the futility of all *à priori* objections to the reality of special revelation in the forms of inspiration, prophecy, or miracle. He ought to exhibit the unreasonableness of pronouncing it in any of its forms impossible or unprovable, or of denying in any given case its reality, prior to or apart from examination of the alleged or relevant evidence. *The limits neither of Divine self-manifestation nor of human knowledge can be fixed by any preliminary theorising.* Epistemology has no more certain or valuable lesson to teach us than that. The whole history of knowledge confirms it.

(7) I must further mention, as belonging to the preliminary duties of Christian Apologetics, an adequate exhibition of what are the kinds of evidence applicable to the proof of Christianity, and an adequate refutation of the views which would confine the proof of it to some only of its real evidences. They are certainly much needed. There are views of the nature of the evidence for Christianity current among the literati and even theologians of the present day, as superficial and defective as those which prevailed in England in the time of the Deists, or in Germany in the time of the Rationalists; views necessarily leading to a most inadequate and unjust estimate of the amount and weight of the real evidence. With the exception of immediate sensuous perception and mathematical demonstration, Christianity is supported by every conceivable form and variety

of evidence, so that the proof of it, taken in its entirety, is vast and varied, comprehensive and conclusive, in the highest degree.

The main work of a Christian Apologetics, however, is, as I have already emphasised, the work of proving the Divine truth and excellence of the whole essential content or substance of Christianity. And obviously, in order to accomplish that work, it must so enter into that specific content or substance, and so lay hold of what is therein, as to be able to present it and its claims to doubting and denying minds in the way best calculated to gain them to faith and obedience.

This department—the chief and properly the largest department—of its work falls naturally into two great divisions, as the essential content of Christianity consists either of ideas or facts, either of religious affirmations or of redemptive acts. The division implies no absolute separation or disjunction, yet it rests on a real, obvious, and important distinction.

The question may be asked, With which—ideas or facts, doctrines or acts—should a Christian Apologetics begin in dealing directly with its main work? It is a question on which I am not prepared to give any decided answer, or to say more than that it seems to me that, in the present state of controversy as to the truth of Christianity, to begin with the ideas or doctrines will be found the more advantageous way. They are general, while the facts are particular. They are more easily ascertainable and less disputable. There are unquestionably a Christian doctrine as to God and His operations, a Christian doctrine as to Man and his relationships and requirements, a Christian doctrine of Morals, a Christian doctrine of Redemption, and a Christian doctrine of the Kingdom of God, not to speak of more special doctrines. So far as his needs extend, the Christian apologist can start with these doctrines without its being possible for any one to deny that they are Christian doctrines. It is also comparatively easy to prove their consistency with the findings of true reason and the disclosures of general revelation, and their superiority as solutions of the most momentous spiritual and practical problems to all those to be found either in the religions or philosophies of the world.



An intelligent Christian apologist will, indeed, certainly not undertake to show that the Christian doctrinal system is *wholly comprehensible*. He will readily acknowledge the presence of mystery in special not less than in general revelation. The creature can never be rationally supposed wholly to comprehend either the mode of being or the ways of working of the Creator. Through whatever medium the human soul rises into the presence of its God, it thereby cannot fail to come into contact with mystery, with what is transcendent and incomprehensible. But that no more makes it irrational or presumptuous for a Christian apologist to undertake to show the inherent reasonableness of Christian doctrines, than for a physical scientist to engage to give reasons for his scientific beliefs. The physical scientist confidently teaches many things which he apprehends but does not comprehend, and is quite justified in doing so. The Christian apologist is equally entitled to do the same.

What, then, may the Christian apologist undertake, without presumption, to prove regarding Christian doctrines? Well, the intrinsic reasonableness of every truly Christian doctrine. There is not one of them contrary to reason, inherently irrational; nor is there any one of them from which an enlightened conscience can revolt as immoral. In equivalent terms, there is no real incongruity between any of them and the legitimate dictates of man's rational and moral faculties. Nor is there any genuinely Christian doctrine which is merely a mystery or enigma, an assertion or utterance which we are enjoined to believe, yet which we are incapable of intelligently apprehending, accepting, or defending. Nor are men asked to receive any such doctrine merely on authority, even the highest. God speaks to us through the revelation in Christ, as He speaks to us through the revelation in Nature, with authority; but in the former not less than in the latter with an authority which does not ignore, contradict, or crush reason and conscience, but which continuously appeals to them so as to elicit and educate whatever powers of rational and moral insight the human spirit has received. The more rational and moral insight a man possesses, the more reasonableness, truth, and goodness will he see in all really Christian doctrine. The Christian

apologist who has any fair measure of it will not find it difficult to show that, although all other religions, without exception, have among their distinctive doctrines tenets which are contrary to reason, inconsistent with conclusions of science, dishonouring to the Divine Being, and harmful to human nature, it is not so with any of the doctrines constitutive of the Christian system of ideas.

He may do more. He may show that all Christian doctrines are satisfactory answers to questions of the most vital importance, which have only been sufficiently answered through Christianity; that they all relate to most momentous spiritual and practical problems, and that as solutions of those problems they are immeasurably superior in rationality to all others which have been suggested, and have quite naturally and legitimately had an incomparably greater influence for good. He may show that even the most distinctive doctrines of Christianity, and those in which the presence of mystery is least deniable, are abundantly attested by their own Divine reasonableness, their own spiritual light and virtue. The writings of Erskine and Campbell with reference to the Atonement, and of Westcott as regards the Incarnation, may suffice to prove that.

Of course, what I have thus affirmed applies *only to doctrines in so far as they are truly Christian, and only to the extent in which they are expressly or implicitly contained in the Christian revelation.* The Christian apologist is under no obligation to vindicate doctrines in their merely confessional form. Although, for example, he cannot refuse to maintain the intrinsic truth and self-evidencing reasonableness of the doctrine of vocation or calling so prominent in the teaching of Jesus, and of the doctrines of fore-knowledge and fore-ordination so prominent in the teaching of St Paul, he is not bound to do the same for all that Augustine and Calvin have taught as to election and predestination. As simply a Christian apologist, he has no direct concern with any doctrine held either by Christian Churches or Christian individuals in so far as it is either inconsistent with or not implied in Christian revelation.

The Christian apologist may further prove with comparative ease that the doctrines of Christianity, many and diverse as they are, are not isolated tenets, not *disjecta membra* of aught

without unity of life and organisation, but elements of a whole claiming to be *The Truth*. They are constitutive portions of a system of the most wonderful richness and comprehensiveness, in which nothing belonging to it has been found fatally weak, false, or pernicious; of a vast economy of love and grace, all the parts of which harmonise, mutually support one another, and tend to a single end, and that the greatest and the best conceivable. The truths of Christianity have each an evidence proper and peculiar to itself, but each is so connected with all and all with each, that their united and consentient testimony is strong indeed.

A Christian Apologetics such as the present time requires should perform in a thorough and comprehensive way the task now indicated. Obviously, it is a very large task. In fact, the division of it to which I am now referring is coextensive with the whole sphere of Christian Dogmatics. It goes over the same ground; follows step by step along the same route. Hence a Christian Apologetics and a Christian Dogmatics ought to be of rights the most closely connected of companions. Christian Dogmatics deals entirely, and Christian Apologetics deals largely with Christian doctrines, with the same matter, with merely a difference of manner determined by difference of aim.

Christian Dogmatics seeks so to exhibit Christian doctrine to those who are Christian in faith, that they may know as fully as possible the treasures of truth implied in their faith. Christian Apologetics, so far as occupied with Christian doctrine, seeks so to present it to those who are prejudiced against it and hostile to it as may most surely and effectively disarm them of their prejudices and win them to the faith. What makes the discipline called Christian Apologetics specially needed are the wants of those who do not share in the Christian faith. In vindicating before them, however, the cause of Christian truth, the claims of Christian doctrine, a Christian apologist should find invaluable support and aid in Christian Dogmatics. The success of a man's advocacy of Christian doctrine must in all circumstances greatly depend on the extent and thoroughness of his knowledge of it.

It is only in the next section of Christian Apologetics,

however, that we get to the very heart of the science. Christianity stands or falls with Christ Himself. Christian faith is faith which receives and rests on Him. The evidences of Christianity, like its doctrines, its morality, and its history, centre in Him. Were Christ a mere man, a mere religious genius like, say, Francis d'Assisi, but greater, the Christian Church has one plain duty before her: it is to make open confession that she has been deluded herself and has deceived the nations, and that Christendom, which was founded and built up and still stands on the faith that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," rests on a gigantic fiction.

Hence the special interest of the arguments from the self-testimony of Jesus, from His sinlessness, from Messianic prophecy, from the miraculous attestation of His mission, and especially that furnished by His resurrection, from the origins of the Christian Church and the spiritual endowments of its early disciples, and from the characters and lives of the Apostles,

Hence, also, the supreme importance apologetically of the foundation of all those arguments, the documents relating to Jesus, *i.e.* the writings of the New Testament generally, and especially the Four Gospels. No enlightened Christian apologist can wish to have those documents exempted in any way from the most sifting analysis and strictest scrutiny of criticism. The more accurately a man estimates the powers of criticism on the one hand, and the strength of the Rock on which the Church is founded on the other, the less, I am persuaded, will he be inclined to fear that any New Testament criticism will displace the corner-stone of the Kingdom of God on earth. When criticism has done its utmost it will be as apparent as ever it was, that, through the documents of the New Testament, mankind has the means of attaining to a knowledge of Jesus Christ far more intimate, profound, and reliable than it has of any other person in ancient history, and good grounds for believing that He was what the catholic faith of the Church holds Him to have been.

Besides the arguments which tend directly to prove the truth of the doctrines and the facts constitutive of Christianity,

there are others which yield indirect yet powerful confirmation to the Christian system, and which ought by no means to be overlooked or depreciated. They may be called Corroborative Proofs, and regarded as constituting a class. The chief of them are these four: the Analogical, the Historical, the Argument from the Adaptedness of Christianity to Human Nature, and the Experimental.

The first undertakes to show that the analogies and harmonies between the Christian system and the systems of Nature (the physical world) and of Providence (as displayed in history) either attest in some considerable measure the truth and Divine origin of the former, or at least make evident that correct views of the latter systems in no way conflict with belief in such a system of special revelation as Christianity implies. The most remarkable apologetic work in English literature—the “Analogy” of Bishop Butler—only professes to perform the humbler of these two tasks, namely, to prove that the same sort of objections which are urged against the Christian scheme may be equally urged against the constitution and course of nature (including history), and are not valid in either case. But it really does more than it promises, while it admirably accomplishes all that it promises.

It is a book, however, which requires to be carefully studied, and which has had much injustice done to it even by able and distinguished men. The criticisms passed on it by Dr Martineau, Mr Bagehot, Miss Hennell, Mr Leslie Stephen, Mr Matthew Arnold, and, I regret to add, even the late deeply and most justly lamented Principal Caird, rest mainly on strange misconceptions as to its contents and argumentation for which there is hardly any excuse to be found in the work itself. Mr Gladstone, in his “Studies subsidiary to the Works of Butler,” did good service by his effective criticism of such irrelevant and misleading criticisms.

Mr Gladstone was often tempted by his theological leanings to enter into theological controversies on subjects as to which he had no special competency, and could only be at the most a dexterous and impassioned special pleader; but this was not the case when Butler was his subject. He had been all through his life a careful and earnest student of Butler’s writings, and

he unquestionably knew them better than any of the censors of them whom he took to task. It may appear presumptuous to speak thus, but be it presumptuous or not, I speak as one who has not only studied but also professionally lectured and examined on Butler for more than thirty years, and who would deem it an incalculable misfortune were the study of such a work as the "Analogy" in any degree neglected because of accusations and arguments which prove nothing except the inadequate acquaintance with Butler's text of some of Butler's critics.

Analogical argumentation, however, may in theology as well as in other sciences be so far employed to establish positive as well as negative conclusions, and has been successfully so employed by Buchanan, Gilett, and other apologetic writers. When thus applied it is, viewed generally, to the effect that there are such positive analogies between the Christian and the natural systems, and that the former so supplements and elucidates the latter, that they must be concluded to be departments of one great system, and to have originated with the same author.

The Historical Proof, consisting as it does of the evidences which may be drawn from the history which directly prepared the way for the rise and diffusion of Christianity, from the ethnic religions with which as historical phenomena it may be compared and contrasted, and from its historical influence and effects since apostolic times, is manifestly a very comprehensive and interesting argument.

It is also a very powerful one. "The tree is known by its fruits" is the simple general premiss on which it rests. It is a premiss which the common sense, the universal reason of mankind easily grasps, and which no sceptical subtlety misapplied is likely to succeed in discrediting. Apart from that it rests only on facts which may by historical methods be accurately and certainly ascertained, and such facts, when they are abundant and accordant, speak plainly and strongly.

Closely connected with it is the argument drawn from *the adaptedness of Christianity to human nature*. That *adaptedness* is an all-sided and all-comprehensive one, embracing the whole

of human nature for good, and only for good, in all its relations, and at all times. Many religions have an adaptedness to human nature which, while it explains their success, condemns them, since it is adaptedness to what is false and debasing in human nature. Christianity alone among religions, shows only an ennobling adaptedness; only adaptedness to the true wants of human nature; only adaptedness to correct and restrain what is evil, and to educe and perfect what is good, in human nature. Yet it is an adaptedness which corresponds to and includes the entire constitution of man, and which applies to him as an individual, and in his various social relationships, and in the Godward aspects of his being; for Christianity as the religion of absolute truth is perfectly adapted to his intellect, as the religion of absolute holy love perfectly adapted to his heart and its affections, and as the religion of absolute righteousness combined with infinite grace perfectly adapted to his moral and volitional nature.

The adaptedness of Christianity to human nature is, of course, what it is because Christianity itself is what it is. Christianity satisfies the wants of human nature through the character of its own contents. Its satisfaction of them is a proof of the truth and excellence of its contents.

Owing to the great interest recently taken in the study of the *History of Religions*, the argument to which I am referring has been greatly confirmed and enriched, and has probably increased in popularity more than any other of the Christian proofs. Hence, following the spirit of the times, one well-known German apologist treats it as the one all-comprehensive argument, and some of the Ritschlians make the History of Religions a department of Christian Apologetics, yet exclude from the latter the greater part of what properly belongs to it. All such narrowness is evil. It necessarily leads to a most inadequate and unjust estimate of the amount and weight of the real evidence.

No Christian Apologetics which would meet the wants of the age should neglect what is called the Experimental Argument—one which, although often so far dealt with, has never been treated with the care which it deserves.

There is no truth more requiring to be borne in mind by the Christian Apologist than that Christianity is *an essentially practical thing*, and that, consequently, like every such thing, a real and sure knowledge of it can only be *practically, experimentally, acquired*. No amount of proof, no accumulation of evidence, on behalf of Christianity can be trusted to produce an assured Christian faith, an entire, an active Christian certitude, in those who do not comply with its requirements as a moral and spiritual life—who do not so yield themselves to its influences as to experience its practical power.

This does not imply that Christian experience is a substitute for other evidence, or warrant us to dispense with other evidence. We cannot have Christian experience except by appropriation of Christian truth, and, if there be Christian truth to appropriate, that truth must have evidences by which it may be recognised and by which experience is enlightened and sustained. Yet none the less is the true path to an assured certainty of Christian truth the practical appropriation of it through the will, the practical realisation of it in the life. So experience testifies. And it only confirms the words of the Master, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. *If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.*”

Just a word in conclusion. Christian Apologetics has its limits, and the Christian apologist ought to realise that it has them. He should not be over-confident of its powers. Mere apologetics, even of the highest order, will not suffice to convince of the truth of Christianity those who have no germs of natural piety within them, no spiritual susceptibility, no sense of the Divine; those who only hate what the Gospel demands, and only love what it condemns. The very best exposition and most earnest enforcement of Christian evidences will never of themselves convert a human soul or produce in it full Christian certitude. Mere light, however pure and bright, will not enlighten where there is no appropriate organ of vision. Only those who have bodily eyes can see bodily things, and only those who have spiritual eyesight can discern spiritual things.

As for full Christian certitude, it is far too great a reward



to be given to any mere intellectual assent or exertion. There is an absolute and infallible certainty which is not attainable by any conditioned and fallible creature. Such certainty, however, is not required in religion any more than in science, philosophy, or ordinary life. The vast amount of manifold and cumulative evidence which can be adduced for Christianity is amply sufficient to exclude any practical chance of error, although not all possibility of doubt or denial. Those who urge us to put all probable evidence aside, and fall back exclusively instead on intuition, or faith, or feeling, which cannot themselves at the utmost yield more than probable evidence, as sources of absolute certitude, ask us to abandon a practically strong and sure foundation for one which is comparatively weak and suspicious. And those who go further, and ask us to put our trust in the speculative dialectics or metaphysical hypotheses of some individual philosopher, as, for instance, of Hegel or Green, will generally be found to recommend us to build on what is merely a fog-bank—a process which will assuredly not lead us to a certainty that cannot be subverted or shaken.

Complete religious certitude is reserved for those who shut their eyes against no kind of good evidence to spiritual truth; who humbly and honestly assent to the truth as it is in Christ in whatever ways it comes to them; and who, further, not merely assent to it, but also faithfully strive to act up to its demands day by day, and in all spheres of their life and duty. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” *Then*—if we fulfil that condition—we shall get the perfect certitude we seek. Until then we have no right to expect it, nor is it desirable that we should get it.



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