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God bless & guide you
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George St Andrew.

THE HEAVENLY VISION

A SECOND SELECTION OF SERMONS PREACHED BY

GEORGE HOWARD WILKINSON, D.D.

*Somewhile Vicar of S. Peter's, Eaton Square, S.W. ;
also, Lord Bishop of Truro ; and, at his death, Most Rev. the
Bishop of S. Andrews, Primus of the Scottish Church*

“ I was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision ”

A. R. MOWBRAY & CO. LTD.
LONDON : 28 Margaret Street, Oxford Circus, W.
OXFORD : 9 High Street

First impression, 1909

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

A FIRST selection of sermons preached by Bishop Wilkinson was published in May, 1908, under the title of *The Invisible Glory*. It has been received with intense gratitude by those who knew the preacher, and it awakened interest in a larger public. This, a second selection, has nothing of the "less good" about it. It is only another volume; complete in itself, as useful to adults at Confirmation, or for any other purpose of private reading; yet it is carefully arranged so as to carry on the previous teaching and to break fresh ground as far as possible.

The Heavenly Vision is a series of instructions upon the ever-present features of the Christian warfare. Its motto is derived from S. Paul's statement as to his own conduct after Baptism. For its main thread it takes four prayers from the Baptismal Service: like all those aspirations which have come down to us through the ages, succinct and devotional as they deal with the more prominent engagements of The Good Fight.

By GOD the FATHER's mercy, and the SON's atoning love, the soul accepts "one Baptism for the Remission of Sins," and it emerges from darkness, original and (in the case of adults) actual sin. The Bishop strongly preached, and here still preaches, the absolute necessity with many of conversion after regeneration.

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At this stage, as is next shown, the "carnal affections" are still strong. Nothing but the expulsive force of spiritual life—the work of God the HOLY GHOST—keeps it true to grace. This is explained in Book II.

In the third place, when some progress has been made, the soul begins to realize the nature of the enemy, in the threefold division of "the devil, the world, and the flesh." Here all strife is conscious, definite, and against an aroused enemy.

It is probably in this section that the most exceptional features of the present book will be noted. Sermons, and least of all these sermons, rarely can be read as preached. But the fact that these uncompromising words were thoughts brought out, in their full personal earnestness, before the highest and probably the most busy men and women in the land—persons who had to meet at least the world at its strongest—is in itself a lesson for those whose arena is smaller. The Bishop notes that a very small object to some is as proportionately great a temptation as the sphere of highest ambitions is to others.

In such cases, and where there is a lesson of "treatment" to be learnt, the local allusions and temporal dates have not been wholly expunged. According to the Bishop's own methods, this has been the case in other sermons: a few were corrected by himself, although not published in his lifetime. In some, it should be further understood, that the preacher began by local allusion which, as he said of such utterances, "had done its work." It may also be noted, in case of any unacquainted with the life of the Bishop taking up this volume, that there are many papers and volumes of teaching by the Bishop which supplement what is

here said. This collection is not essentially for Churchworkers and Retreatants, as such: the former have been provided lately with *Spiritual Counsels to District Visitors and Others*, and possibly a selection of the Bishop's Retreat Notes may eventually see the light—in addition to a small volume entitled *One by One*, published in 1909, for bishops and clergy only. Lists of other publications may be obtained from any bookseller.

Although individual dealing with and by the workers of the Church is not directly included in the fourth section, which assumes its hearers to be consciously within the Communion of Saints, there is strong insistence upon the corporate life of the Church. In this place a sermon has been inserted as preached at the consecration of Dr. Maclagan and others (p. 271), and, here too (p. 285) will be found the "first sermon" mentioned in the *Memoir* (A. J. Mason, D.D., 2 vols., Longmans, 1909), which, preached immediately after ordination, yet contains the germ of the thoughts of the future shepherd of souls. Scottish readers will turn with deep interest to the first public utterance in Scotland (p. 320). They may know now—in words of one dear to their Bishop—"That everything seemed dark and strange, and it was only his faith that enabled him not to refuse the bishopric. He went into the cathedral, knelt down and sought 'inspiration' for his enthronement sermon, saw the Alpha and Omega in the east window, the text came to him, and this sermon was the result."

It may be of interest, as showing the Bishop's attitude to his own work, to quote his words as to the

“Gospel of the Kingdom,” which has been printed as a pamphlet, many years ago :—

THE defects of the following Sermon are so great that, in the first instance, I declined to allow it to be published.

I believe that the thoughts which it contains are from God, however imperfect the language in which they are expressed.

May He bless them to His Church, in this glorious but critical period of her history.

By means of this volume, may we too in this our day be enabled to recognize the value of the “glorious and critical” period in which we live. Some of these sermons might have been preached at this time, instead of having done their first work—to those best acquainted with religious circles, a great and historical work—chiefly in the ’seventies of the nineteenth century.

But, as was said by Canon Body in reviewing the *Memoir* by Dr. Mason, in the *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1909 :—

“The greatest force in that influence was the personality of the man himself. Other things contributed to it, but were subordinate to this. He was a special spiritual influence because he lived in the spiritual himself, and was at home in it. He had a vision of Him Who is invisible, and was continually in communion with Him. . . . If in each of God’s saints some special feature of the Christian character is to be recognized, in Wilkinson what arrests is the power and beauty of devotion.”

And yet, in very consequence of the light of the Invisible Glory, and as impulsive force derived from the Heavenly Vision, came the practical side. The Bishop set forth at the outset of his work in Truro that he desired to say at death : “My FATHER, I have tried to finish the work which Thou gavest me to do.”

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PART I

A DEATH UNTO SIN

“O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in these persons may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them.”

THE PROPHETS' MESSAGE

"I sent unto you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."—JER. xliv. 4.

THE origin of evil, my brethren, has not been explained unto us. It is shrouded in a deeper darkness than that mysterious gloom which fell over the city of Jerusalem as the LORD was hanging on His Cross. Christianity is not responsible for the difficulty. Philosophers were perplexed, and sought in vain to penetrate the gloom and to answer the question for ages before GOD became Incarnate.

The Bible is written for our practical guidance. From the beginning, early and late, by prophecy and by miracle, by word and by deed, the Eternal GOD—loving each one of His children, longing as the mother longs to snatch the babe from the burning flame—the Eternal FATHER has addressed to the children whom He has created the solemn warning of my text, Oh, do not, yield not to, touch not, this abominable sin which I hate.

Yes, in the past, and in the present, and in the future, all whose eyes have not been blinded by self-indulgence and worldliness, all whose hearts have not been hardened by the deceitfulness of that indwelling

corruption, all who have eyes to see or ears to hear, whether they look to the past or to the present or to the future, can hear the voice of the LORD GOD speaking unto them, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

1. GOD speaks to us by the records of the past.

The HOLY SPIRIT takes us, as it were, by the hand and leads us to the fair garden of Paradise, and bids us watch that withering blight, those withered flowers, and those withering downcast forms of our first parents, driven forth by the flaming sword, because they have done the abominable thing that GOD hated. Or—rising above the noise of the rushing waters, from the heights of the mountains where the refuse of the human family are striving in vain to escape from the all-encircling deluge—we hear the voice of the Living GOD amid the desolation of the flood, saying to His children, Be warned ; touch not that abominable thing which I hate.

So is it through all the inspired volume. In its pages, GOD warns us by the sword, by the famine, by the pestilence, by the hissing flame, by the overwhelmed cities. He warns us by the prophet of GOD mounting in lonely misery those heights of Pisgah, looking out in vain upon the Canaan for which he yearned ; shut out from that glorious inheritance, because once, and once only, he had done the abominable thing which GOD hated. In Moses' voice we seem to hear the echo, Take heed ; be warned ; by sin I have been overcome ; by sin I have lost the promised inheritance. In all the wanderings of the wilderness ; in the ruin of Jerusalem, in the desolation of the city, in the cries of the thousand exiles driven hither and thither, the banished outcasts of Israel ; by all and by every means, from the beginning even unto the end of the Bible, GOD sends unto us His prophets,

saying, Oh, do not, touch not, this abominable thing that I hate.

2. And the same message is sent to us as we look round on the ordinary circumstances of life.

We are taken by the hand of some wise physician, and he leads us into the wards of some of the great hospitals of this mighty city. He leads us through one court after another, and he points to diseased children, and the vacant stare of idiots. And we ask him how the dreadful seed was sown that has come up in that deadly harvest of a blighted childhood and a ruined life. And he tells you that in those particular cases it was the "wild oats" that were sown by the father—it may be—fifty years previously; these are results of men's sins, committed in youth, although perhaps forgiven in penitence, and blotted out of GOD'S Book so far as future punishment was concerned! These cripples and these idiots are the children of drunkards and of men who were "fast" (as the world calls it) in earlier life. Or there is a case of the mother who wilfully and carelessly left her little child to the neglect of a nurse, that she might dance and drink in of this world's pleasure, and you see the fruit in the blighted, wasted life. The abominable thing has been touched, and although with weeping and with mourning she has confessed her sin, it finds her out in the broken heart, the miserable, feeble womanhood, of the girl whom now she loves dearer than her own life. Thus GOD'S warning to-day is heard in the voice of every wise physician in this our London, "Touch not this abominable thing that I hate."

3. Then GOD the HOLY SPIRIT leads us on to gaze at the heavenly vision of the future.

He shows us the glory of heaven; He entrances us with the echo of the angels' songs; He tells us of the

home where pain and sin and suffering shall be no more ; where they shall hunger no more nor thirst any more ; where every longing of the heart shall be satisfied ; where every difficulty of the mind shall be solved ; where every aspiration of the immortal spirit shall be realized. And then, as the veil is lifted up and we gaze upon "the ten thousand times ten thousand," and watch those waiting in Paradise, and know them in their longing to welcome those for whom they pray into the glory of that invisible kingdom ; even thence a voice cometh forth from the eternal glory, Watch ; pray ; touch not this abominable thing that I hate, unless thou wouldst lose for ever the heavenly vision—the rest of Paradise and the glory of heaven.

So is it in the past and in the present, and so we gaze on to the future. Early and late, our all-loving GOD, the FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, pleads with us, saying, Touch not, do not, that abominable thing which I hate.

And yet, my brethren, all the teaching of the past and the present and the future seems gathered up to-day¹ into the three quiet hours in which we are assembled together in this house of prayer. Amid the mysterious gloom of Calvary we seem to some extent at any rate to realize what sin must appear before the blessed ones in Paradise, and the angel-band, and in the sight of the ever-blessed Trinity. We draw near to Calvary, and we listen to the bitter mocking, we mark the cruel scourging, we see men changed into fiends as they walk up and down triumphing over their defenceless Prisoner, wagging their heads at Him with fiendish malice. We soon enter into the little company of the blessed ones, and we hear S. Peter denying Him with cursing and swearing. We watch one who had kissed His sacred cheek, one for

¹ Good Friday, 1877.

whom the glorious throne was prepared, on which he was to have sat in the regeneration judging the twelve tribes of Israel. We watch the power of evil in the careless crowd, in the defiant mob, in the inner circle of the LORD'S OWN disciples. And even yet we have not learned the fullness of the teaching that Calvary would give unto us. Even yet the voice of the LORD GOD has not been heard in all its distinctness saying to us, Loathe, hate, repudiate for ever, the abominable thing that nailed the SON OF GOD to the accursed tree.

Yes, my brethren, mysterious though it is to see men changed to-day into fiends, fearful though it is to listen to men like S. Peter uttering those foul oaths, the mere sight of that lonely Figure on that deadly Cross seems to speak to us with a power more eloquent than any human words. When every prophet's voice had fallen in vain upon the self-satisfied world, then GOD sent unto us His SON, preaching with the outstretched arms on Calvary, and saying,—Oh, by that Agony, by that bloody Sweat, by that Cross and Passion, I beseech you, My children, saith GOD your FATHER, do not that abominable thing which I hate.

For the mystery is not explained. It would be an impertinence to dwell on such a thought. All that is certain is this, that the SON OF GOD died. He Who was very GOD ; He Whom angels adore ; He Who, surrounded by Cherubim and Seraphim, shall judge each child of Adam : He was hanging upon that Cross, He Who is very GOD. And it was this hidden principle of evil, this strange force which we cannot explain, but of which we are so awfully conscious every hour of our lives : it was this that caused the SON OF GOD to die. O FATHER, forgive—He would say—"forgive them, for they know not what they do." Forgive the poor blinded eyes that see no glory in

the Cross. Forgive the poor hearts, deadened with this world, who can listen to no message, even though a crucified GOD is sending it unto their souls. GOD help you if you can listen unmoved to that wondrous story of the Cross. No thoughtful man or woman, who allows himself one quiet hour to contemplate the fact that (in our human language) GOD had to die for sin, will ever require a human voice, I think, to send home the message of my text, "Do not this abominable thing that I hate."

So, as the practical conclusion of the whole subject, if GOD speaks to us in the past and in the present and in the future, we will answer likewise for the past and for the present and for the future, "Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth."

1. We will answer GOD with humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts to-day. O my GOD, we will say, open my blinded eyes; show me what that past sin really appeared in Thy sight. O men and brethren, to whom I speak with no power at all, because it is only GOD Who can break up a heart that has been hardened by a life of self-pleasing!—O ye women of England, who have drugged your consciences with the sweet opiates of an easy, self-indulgent, harmless (as the world would say) life!—kneel down and pray your GOD to unfold the past to-day. Pray GOD to show you what that one day of neglected prayer really looked like to the holy angels and the invisible kingdom. Pray GOD to show you what was the true nature of those "mere wild oats." Drag out each sin into the light: cover it not over. Brethren beloved in CHRIST, I plead with you by the love of Him Who died for you, beware of a half-repentance. Beware of that miserable delusion that saith, I am doing differently now, and the past is gone. GOD saw the past. He knew it from the day when you were baptized

to this very moment in which the prophet's voice rings home into your heart. Open the door of your heart to-day, and recall the neglected prayer, or the unopened Bible, the forgotten poor. God saw the self-indulgent heaping up of wealth, the covetousness, and all the sins which in the Bible He has condemned ; He is aware of all the pride and the vanity, the grasping of things that man loves—things that may make us prosper in the world, but which are all part of the abominable thing which the God hates before Whom you and I have to stand. Be warned when a man sends you a message, as one has done from his death-bed this morning, saying, "Oh, let my sin be told to every man—I care not what he has done—if from my death-bed I can save a soul ; ask them to pray for me, not that I may recover, but that God may forgive me ; that God may have mercy on my soul, that God may make my sin the means of bringing others to repentance." Such is the message which came from the far-away shores of the Mediterranean, wafted here to S. Peter's this morning : the man was what hundreds in the church are. God open your eyes to the past.

Rest not till your sins have been acknowledged, till you know that they are forgiven, and your peace is made with Him before Whose judgement-seat you may soon be standing.

2. And, then, for the present : let us implore Almighty God to give us courage to read over the history of the Passion of JESUS CHRIST. God careth not where you are—in church, or in your own room, but on your knees, with your Bible and your Prayer Book, read about JESUS CHRIST. Read of the Passion, till that unutterable Love take possession of you. The fear of hell may frighten us, the joy of heaven may draw up our hearts to God ; but nothing will keep us in real,

earnest contrition, nothing will make the softened tears flow and the heart rise up determined to live to GOD, nothing will help us to get rid of the covetousness and the fear of the world and the idolatry of things that are passing away : nothing, save only the knowledge of the love of JESUS CHRIST.

You have heard of that marble statue in the lonely garden, of which the fable tells us that all the night it was cold and dead and lifeless ; and (so runs the old legend) the moment the rays of the bright gladdening sunbeam fell on it, at once it was vocal with heavenly harmony. Oh ! believe me, when once we realize (if it be but on a lonely Good Friday) how He does love us, how He must have loved us to give those Hands to be pierced with those cruel nails, to let those thorns pierce that sacred Brow ; when we look up simply on that LORD, and say, Whatever be the explanation of the Atonement, I know that that is a fact, and that He died, and if He died He must love me ; oh, brethren, it is then that there comes, not the feverish excitement, the wild uncontrolled emotion, which is succeeded by the black ashes of despair ; but the calm, solemn, concentrated contrition that melts and yet gladdens the heart.

This is what S. Paul felt, when he said, "The love of CHRIST constraineth me" : binds me, that is, as with iron bands of love ; carries me away (for that is what the Greek word means) as the deep-rolling stream with its calm, solemn current bears us on, carrying every obstacle before it. The love of CHRIST binds, constrains, impels me ; not to live for myself, but for Him Who loved me and gave Himself for me. It is then, when we realize for a moment even, the love of CHRIST, that, looking upon Him Whom we pierced, we mourn. It is then that we give up ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to His service.

3. And as with the present and with the past, so for a single moment as regards the future.

Never, after the love of CHRIST has been realized, can we again join the crowd of fools who make a mock at sin! We have learned what was the cost of sin to CHRIST. We have learned that it is the abominable thing that sent Him to Calvary. For instance, when we are tempted (as we are all tempted at times) to laugh when we watch some person who has had a trifle more than he ought to have had, observing his face flushed, or his excitement and jubilant feelings, we should rather shudder and say, "That is the abominable thing GOD hates; that is the beginning of that drunken habit that will drag that boy or man, that girl or woman, into hell." It is an abominable thing—a child of GOD laughing at that sin. Or, proud feelings come, and self-complacent feelings, and all the great rush of earthly desires. Then, as men who have knelt at the foot of the Redeemer Who died on the Cross, as men who remember that pride was the abominable thing that brought the devils out of heaven and cast them into hell, that pride was the abominable thing that lost Paradise to our first parents, that pride was the accursed evil that caused the SON of GOD to have to die on the Cross, we say: LORD, by Thy Cross and Passion, from all pride and self-seeking, from all want of love to GOD or man, from every lust of the flesh, from every tempting assault of the world—however popular it may make me—from every subtle snare of the devil, when he would drive me to unbelief and despair: oh, by Thine Agony and bloody Sweat, good LORD, deliver me!

My brethren, learn the prophetic teaching of the past and the present and the future. Listen to (if you have never yet heard) the voice of the LORD GOD, rising up early, sending to you—however imperfect the human

ministry may be—still sending to you to-day His prophets. It says in the Name of God to every one, Touch not the abominable thing ; repent of thy sin, confess it to thy God to-day. Rest not till it is forgiven ; mourn over it ; and never, never, make a mock, or speak lightly, of that abominable thing which thy God hateth.

II

THE GREAT REFUSAL

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”—S. MATT. xxiii. 37.

IN the branch of the great Catholic Church to which we belong, every saint's day, as quickly as possible, leads our thoughts away from S. Paul, or S. Peter, or whoever it may be whose festival is kept: away from man to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Eternal SON of GOD, by Whom the words of my text were spoken: the Eternal SON of GOD! More than once I have been asked to say publicly, before GOD and man, that I did believe that JESUS CHRIST was GOD. At first I put the request aside, until once the letter was full of piteous entreaty. The writer said, “I believe you are an honest man, and you would not say out in your church that you did believe that JESUS CHRIST was GOD, if you did not; and everybody that is near me says that this is an idea that men are abandoning. Will you say it?” And I say it. I believe in JESUS CHRIST, very GOD; GOD of GOD, Light of Light, Very GOD of Very GOD.

There is one reason why many do not believe. Before I give the rule I own that there are exceptions to it. There are great scientific men who, of necessity, in the work that GOD has entrusted to them, of learning His revelation in nature, have so concentrated their

thoughts upon the things of nature, as not to leave themselves leisure for developing fully the spiritual side of their being, or bringing their mind to bear upon what I may call, for want of a better word, spiritual facts. And there are many who may have had religion put before them in such a miserable—I was going to use stronger language—in such a miserable form. They have had GOD painted as a Being delighting in the torture of His children, instead of as a GOD Who, though obliged to let some suffer, does it ever with the breaking Heart of the FATHER mourning over the children whom He loves. Or else, they have seen people making a great profession of religion, always at services or at meetings, full of talk. They have become sickened of the whole subject, and they have said, Well, I shall leave faith and religion alone, and I shall try to be an honest man, and to do my duty in this life, if that is not religion.

But, my dear brethren, I have never myself known, with these rare exceptions, any man who had not got some secret sin that made him afraid of committing himself to CHRIST, made him afraid of believing that there was a GOD and a judgement to come, afraid of acknowledging CHRIST to be GOD, because he would be obliged to pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand; I have never known an honest man give up one year—and a year is surely not much to decide a matter upon which eternity depends—give up a year to the patient study of evidences, without coming back joyfully to acknowledge with all other Christians that JESUS CHRIST is GOD.

Out of the hundreds of arguments, I will just touch upon one for a moment in passing. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST distinctly claimed to be GOD. About that there is no doubt. Either, therefore, He was deliberately deceiving people, doing evil that good might come; or else

He was Himself deceived, an enthusiast carried away by His emotions. Now, He could not have deliberately deceived, because any infidel of common intelligence who has written upon the life of CHRIST, acknowledges Him to be beautiful, pure, and holy. One of the most interesting signs of the present day, I think, is the way in which men of all shades of opinion are longing to rally round CHRIST. They say, We do not understand the dogma, but we want to follow that example ; come with us. There is a great fallacy under the words, but that is not my business this morning. I only mention it as a fact, that all who have studied the subject bear witness that CHRIST was a good and a holy man, and therefore not a liar, and a deliberate deceiver.

But was He carried away by His emotions ? Here, again, there are two types of character. There is the emotional man, easily impressed ; and there is the self-disciplined, self-controlled man, keeping his emotions under, and only allowing them now and then to appear. Which of these was JESUS CHRIST ? A few texts will answer the question. When His followers were excited, He said, "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." A number of people gathered round Him and said, Blessed is the mother that bare Thee ! Yes, He said, but more blessed are they who hear the Word of GOD, and keep it. But the most striking text is yet to be given. Our LORD was gathering round Him a little company who were to go out and transform the whole aspect of the world. He was kindling their enthusiasm ; and yet, in the middle of all that kindling of their enthusiasm, He kept so calm and still that He told them they must expect persecution, that they must expect to be misunderstood. O dear Christian workers, what joy there is in this ; that they

must expect, the more good they did, the less the world would thank them for it ; that they must be prepared often for apparent failure, and no results ; that the more they were winning people for GOD, the more Satan would attack them, and dry up the joy of their own inner life ; so that they would often hardly be able to pray, so terribly would they be bound in that hour of darkness !

But more than that. He said, Remember this. When people take you, and bring you before rulers, and bare your back, and you feel the scourge falling upon you, and then are dragged to some cruel tree to be crucified, never judge them. I, your GOD, tell you beforehand that those who treat you in that way will think that they are doing GOD service : they being in their way as earnest as you are. Therefore you must be calm and strong, and not carried away by your natural feelings to think that they are a lot of wicked sinners who are behaving in that way.

Now I ask, was that the emotional man, carried away, borne on the tide of popular favour ? I leave it to you. Therefore JESUS CHRIST, as we saw, could not deceive and be a liar ; and by the very laws of nature and of psychology it is plain that His was not the class of mind that was likely to be found amongst a self-deceived band of enthusiasts.

But, as the Apostle says—when he looked back upon that marvellous life, when he looked at the hiding of the Omnipotence, when he thought of the manger in Bethlehem and the village home at Nazareth, of the Face that man had looked on, when CHRIST was tired, without a place where to lay Himself : when he thought of the Son of Mary wandering about among the poor, without bread to eat, or water with which to quench His thirst—marvelling at that strong self-abnegation, he says that the LORD JESUS did not think His Godhead a

matter to be snatched at, and grasped. It was not to be taken hold of and kept, every bit of it, just as we—all of us—keep every bit of our good character, every bit of our position, every bit of any credit we may have for religious or for intellectual force ; snatching at it, and keeping it, and being hurt if anybody does not ascribe honour to us exactly in the measure in which we deserve it. The LORD JESUS, S. Paul says, did not snatch at His Godhead, but emptied Himself of it, and became Man.

Yes ! He is very Man as well as very GOD. And that was the side of His Being that He put forward. He knew how in this age, and in every other age, the very humiliation of His life would be thrown in His face. He knew for what reasons He would be despised and rejected by the world, as He is being rejected now in this great London of ours. But He loved us so dearly, He knew that a man of sorrows, a suffering CHRIST, would win more souls than a king triumphing in His Godhead. He knew that there is a peculiar power—O dear people, if some of you are in sorrow just now, remember this and cherish it—He knew that there is a peculiar power which can only be won by suffering. He knew that this power is only won after perhaps a year of spiritual darkness, in which GOD has seemed hidden from us ; or only after years (known only to Himself) in which One Face has seemed never away from us in each pause from the busy outer life. He knows that it is by suffering that man wins a power of gentleness and love for others, a power of helping, a glorious priesthood !

Deliberately, no man taking His life from Him, He determined to be a suffering Man ; suffering in childhood, suffering all through His life, to the last great agony of Calvary. He went about as Man amongst men. Come, He said, to Me. Come to Me. I am a Man of sorrows ; I am acquainted with grief. Come, if you

find the work hard ; come, if the business presses upon you ; come, when the head aches with the overstrain. Come, you poor heavy laden ones, come to Me, and I will give you rest. And when the people were going away, that great Heart of love fastened its eyes upon them. Will you also, He said, go away ? Will you go away ? Him that cometh to Me, whatever the past has been, I will never send away.

And then, when some did go away—when they could not really take the bother of carrying His yoke every day, it seemed so tiresome, they thought ; when they could not quite make up their mind to be different from other people ; when they could not make up their mind really to do that which in their hearts they knew would be the best—He just was silent. And when they got angry with His silence, He let them do with Him what they liked. He let them drag Him as a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before her shearers, He was dumb. He did not resist their will. He knew that the best thing that He could do for the world now was to die for it ; and so, at any rate, He would do that. He hung upon the Cross there, with the nails and the thorns. And before He died, He did them all the good He could ; just as His FATHER goes on sending down the rain upon the just and the unjust, and making His sun to shine upon the evil and the good. He went on doing what good He could. He opened the blind eyes, and made the deaf hear, and fed the hungry ; and almost His last act was to touch the ear of the soldier who had come to take Him to prison.

But His Heart was just breaking ; for He knew that it was as impossible for fire not to burn, as for those people to reach heaven who were loving the world, and caring what the men in Jerusalem said more than they cared for what His FATHER said—unless they were

changed. He saw that they would not be changed. He saw that every day they were just fixing a great gulf between themselves and heaven, which very soon they would not be able to pass for ever. He saw that their character every day was hardening : that they were coming to think it was wrong not to do what everybody did, however God might have spoken : that they were coming to think it was actually necessary to put self first, and the world second, and God last.

He saw this going on under His very eyes ; and He knew that unless He crushed their free-will, that unless He broke down their freedom, that unless He made them into dumb animals, He could do nothing more. And so, I say, He did all that was left Him : He died for them. And before He died His Heart just broke, and the tears flowed down His cheeks, and He said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I have loved you ! How My Soul has yearned over you ! How often from that hill of Olivet have I looked down upon your streets and seen that false religion, that religion without power, that worldliness, that love of self ! Oh, how often would I have gathered you, as the hen gathers the poor little helpless chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Oh ! the unutterable sadness of my CHRIST, that caused Him to utter those words of sorrow !

What can I, dear brethren, say more ? Only perhaps this, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He is alive, alive ! Thank GOD for it ! What could we do without Him ?

And He is the same, with the same mind and the same Heart. His last message, as He went up into heaven, and the clouds received Him out of their sight—the last message to the disciples was this, This same JESUS, this same JESUS ! The JESUS that you read of in

the Gospels, the JESUS Who cannot break a man's free-will, the JESUS Who can only break His own Heart when the world will not come to Him, the JESUS Who said, Come unto Me, the same ! And He is looking down on us to-day. He has been gathering us.

Oh ! how wonderfully various are the ways in which He has gathered us ! Before I came across to the church I ran over a book of mine, where I have a few of the names of those who have entered into their rest ; who, so far as man dare judge, have had an abundant entrance, and gone with joy into the other world. And I could not help thinking how marvellous was the manifold wisdom of GOD ; how wonderful were the different ways in which they had been brought ! There was the man who had never thought of religion till GOD gave him one to love him with all her heart ; and I remember the day when he came over to the old vicarage and said, "GOD is good ; GOD has been good to me, I wish I had been a better man ! Oh, would to GOD that I had been able to say what I can never say again on earth—but, Mr. Wilkinson, I am going to start afresh, GOD helping me, He has been so kind to me." And oh, the joy of being able to tell him in those weeks before his marriage of the power of the Blood of CHRIST, of the magnificence of the new creation, of the kingdom of the new Jerusalem : that every man who will come to CHRIST with an honest heart shall be welcomed as the poor prodigal in the parable was welcomed, when the father came to meet him down that dusty road, and fell on his neck and kissed him ; and when the better people were saying that he destroyed morality by treating a bad man in that way, he only silenced them with, My son ! it is my son that was dead and is alive again ; it is my son that was lost and is found !

Oh, what joy it was ! and then on that bright mar-

riage morning, to feel that it was a new start, that the love of God had broken down his heart !

And then, think of other trials : bankruptcy, sorrow, long-lingering illness ; pain in little children, that seemed at first so hard to look at, but which became at last an angel from heaven ; times when some were almost ruined ; when they were standing on the very brink of a precipice, with things that would have disgraced them for life, and God never let anybody know ; and so that tremendous love broke down their hearts, and they are living to Him.

I dare not, I must not go on. You can understand, my people, how my heart seems to go back to it all ; how, as I see you around me, I recall all those conversations and prayers, and the wonderful ways in which the LORD has gathered us. And if any one has gone astray, what is to bring him back on this bright S. Peter's morning ? Just this, CHRIST loves me. CHRIST says, Will you go away again ? Will you break My Heart again ? That is all.

And oh, I dare not, I cannot end as I intended. I did intend to have worked out, with you, that solemn thought that all science is now teaching us, the tremendous force of law in the kingdom of God. We are coming to see that if a stupid, pig-headed man will not learn what science can teach him about the laws of health, and will not look properly to the sanitary arrangements of his home, though God loves the wife and loves the little children, the typhoid comes, and the blood is poisoned, and misery comes into the home. God is showing that there are great principles that cannot be broken even on earth. And He says, Have you not understanding ? Do you not see that it is an equally true principle, that what a man sows in spiritual things he reaps ? Do you not see that, by the law of your

freedom, you are every day and every night that you live either softening or hardening your character?" Every time you do an act of self-denial, every time you sacrifice yourself for others, every time you lose a friend rather than laugh at something that ought never to be mentioned, every time you lose what the world has got to give you for the sake of the CHRIST Who died for you, you are fixing a great gulf between yourself and the torments of the lost. And on the other hand, every day and every hour in which you are just yielding up your will—never mind whether it is wicked, or if it seem as innocent as you like—every time you yield up yourself to the power of this present world that crucified CHRIST, and surrender yourself to the mastery of the principles which brought CHRIST to His death in Jewry, you are as surely fixing a great gulf between yourself and heaven as ever that poor man did in the parable: who did nothing wrong, but only got blinded by the glitter and deafened by the noise of this world, and so never saw him whom GOD had sent to be his angel of deliverance, lying at his very door. Do you not see it? I wanted to have worked it all out with you, but it is too awful!

One cannot bear sometimes to dwell upon that hour, that may have come to some, of the wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is so terrible. When CHRIST has done all that He can, when the being has made up its mind, then one of two things happens. Sometimes it becomes perfectly happy, with no more prickings of conscience; gives enough money, and does enough work to satisfy itself. CHRIST has done all He can. He can only leave it quietly, and hope; and, of course, He does not give any trouble that can possibly be avoided; just as the FATHER lets the rain come down and the sun shine on the evil and the good. The dear little children grow up

better than other people's children, and the home is happier, and the wife is good. All goes well. But CHRIST is saying, Oh, if you had known, in that your day, the things that belong to your peace, but now they are hid from your eyes! And sometimes it seems the kindest thing to take the man out of the world altogether.

I had an awful thing happen last week, I can hardly speak of it. A few months ago some poor people in a country parish wrote to me, and besought me to get them the means of grace; besought me to get a little mission-house built, where they could just have the Gospel preached to them, and say a few prayers. And I earnestly entreated a man who had the property, and could do it, to help to do it. And he would not do it. And he persuaded himself that he could not do it. And I never judged him. He wrote me a beautiful letter, in which he said he could not; but he could have done this: he could have come over to me, and he could have said, "I cannot afford to do this, but will you pray with me, and we will see how it can be managed for the poor people." If he had loved God, if he had loved souls—for the great gulf had not then been fixed; God grant it was never entirely fixed; I am not judging—he could never have read those poor people's prayer for help, and not have come over at any rate to see what could be done. And I was very unhappy, and I saw years before me in that parish, with no provision for the outlying hamlet. And one morning the rural dean wrote to me that an awful thing had happened; he said, "So-and-so went to bed, and he died in the night!"

And another man came into the property, and I pleaded with him; and at first he was touched, and he said he would. But, then, his wife found the house very uncomfortable, and there was a great deal to do to it.

I am not judging the man. There was a great deal to do ; it was really very necessary to spend a great deal of money. And the last letter I had from him was that it was no use trying ; nobody would do it, and he did not see how it was to be done. And again I could only think, "Oh, would that the man had known the joy, even when you cannot give, of praying that others who can may give." And on Friday morning, when my letters came up, one letter was, "So-and-so was walking along, and he has fallen down dead !"

My dear brethren, I cannot tell you what I feel about it. It is one instance, out of hundreds of instances that I have seen, where, when a man appears to have made up his mind that the world shall be all he cares for, and that CHRIST shall not have all his being, and GOD sees that perhaps he would do harm if he were allowed to remain on earth any longer, he dies. Die, die, die ! I seem to hear the cry of those dying men in my ears !

Dear people, let CHRIST gather you. Let Him never have to say of you, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often—oh, even to that S. Peter's Day—would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !

III

SIN AGAINST THE LORD

“David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”
2 SAM. xii. 13.

HOW startling, brethren, at first sight, is the life of David; how strangely do the contrasts of those forty years pass before our minds!

Reared from his childhood in the Faith of God, he appears at the commencement of his history in all the varied characters which are calculated to awaken our sympathy and to command our admiration. As the champion of Israel against the blasphemers of JEHOVAH, as the conqueror of Goliath (the proud warrior of Philistia), as the loyal soldier, the brave adventurer, the firm unflinching friend, he has been from our earliest years our favourite Bible character. Then suddenly, and almost without a word of warning, the whole scene is changed. The lion-hearted son of Jesse remains at home in listless cowardice. The strong man, who had borne with unflinching hardihood the trials of exile, is transformed into the effeminate idler. The warm-hearted trusting friend betrays, with well-weighed subtilty, the simple-minded captain of his army. The sweet Psalmist of Israel, whose holy spirit had borne him, as on angels' wings, to the very gates of heaven, is hustled by one dread fall into the depths of deceit and adultery and murder. Strange, brethren, is all this, and yet the Word of God dares to lay before us the failings

as well as the excellences, the sins as well as the virtues, of its heroes. Freely it speaks to us of the patriarchs and prophets. Freely it tells us of the impatience of Moses and the falsehood of Abraham and the despondency of Elijah and the cowardice of the Apostle Peter. Freely it paints for us the whole life in all its varied colouring.

And is it not, brethren, this holy freedom which renders the examples of these Scripture saints of such real value to us in our busy working life? Is it not this mingling of good and evil which makes us realize that they were men like ourselves, struggling as we are struggling, tried as we are tried, and tempted as we are tempted? Yes, this history of David is, in broad outline, the heart experience of every Christian. True that we may not have risen to the same heights of spiritual love, and may, by God's grace, have been preserved from so fearful a fall; yet however much our life may differ from that of the sovereign of Israel in degrees both of good and evil, its main features are substantially the same.

All real Christians can say with David that their souls thirst for GOD—for the living GOD. All, alas! can tell of days of falling away—cold, lifeless times when sin is strong and faith is weak and love is wellnigh quenched. All, thank GOD, can speak of hours of repentance, blessed hours in which the HOLY SPIRIT has entered into the heart and wrung out from their half-reluctant lips the confession of the text, "I have sinned against the LORD."

It is with this last stage of David's history that I am especially concerned to-night. We know that his repentance was a true repentance and was accepted by GOD. We know also that there is in this world an immense amount of false repentance, a sort of spurious sorrow for sin which deadens the conscience and ruins the spiritual

life. I would suggest, therefore, to those who are using this Lent in self-examination and special prayer, that they should take Psalm li, verse by verse, and compare their feelings with the feelings of the Psalmist, their repentance with his repentance.

Observe, for instance, the deep sorrow, "the broken and contrite heart" of which he speaks. The longing for cleansing and pardon, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." The thorough surrender of his whole heart to GOD, "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin." The longing to work for GOD and help others forward in the divine life, "Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked: and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." We can trace the fullness of the pardon received, the joy of forgiveness which breathes out in every utterance of Psalm xxxii, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

In order to help you in this work which I have suggested, I wish to dwell at length on two features in this repentance, praying that the HOLY GHOST may bless to us all, for CHRIST'S sake, the word spoken.

First, then, let us observe David's *humility*. He confesses his sin to the LORD. He confesses it to Nathan the prophet. He confesses it to the whole congregation. He makes no excuse, he does not attempt to cast the blame upon others. He does not say with Adam, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." It is not with him as with Saul, "The people spared the best of the flocks, and compelled me to break the commandment of the LORD." Without any reserve, humbly and honestly David takes upon himself the entire burden of his sin, "I have sinned. I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

Now, brethren, this humility is by no means so

common as might at first sight appear. Many who fancy that they have repented have never truly humbled themselves. It is marvellous to observe the different ways in which our pride will try to spare us the pain of real self-abasement. Sometimes it will endeavour to save us from lowering ourselves before man. It is true, this great enemy seems to whisper, it is true that you have sinned against man as well as against GOD, but why acknowledge your shortcoming to your neighbour? Why give him an opportunity of lording it over you? Tell it, if you will, to your Maker, but do not humble yourself before man! At other times this subtle pride will tempt us to be content with only a half-humiliation in the presence of GOD Himself. "You are no worse," it says, "than others, not so bad as many. True that you have sinned, but your trial was so great, the circumstances in which you were placed were so difficult, your nature is so feeble that you may surely be excused," and so forth.

It would be easy enough to expose these fallacies. It would be easy to show how sins which have been committed against our neighbours, as a general rule, should, at any rate, be confessed to those whom we have injured. It would not be difficult also to prove that the excuses to which I have referred are nothing less than mere tamperings with conscience. Friends may have tempted us and our position may have been very trying, our nature may be encompassed with human weakness, but what palliation is there in all this for a Christian's transgression? What excuse do they offer, for one who has a power within greater than all the powers of evil which are ranged against him, for one whose body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST, who had only to ask and to receive all the help which he required from that Saviour Whose strength is perfected in human weakness? Time would

fail me to answer all the arguments which this great spirit of pride is ever suggesting to our hearts. I can only press upon you this truth, gathered alike from the Bible and from all experience. All who really repent are ready to pass with David through the valley of humiliation. The man who *truly* repents is ready, if need be, to humble himself before his fellow-man, to say with the prodigal of old, I will arise and go to the father, the wife, the friend, the stranger, the minister whom I have wronged, and however painful the effort, I will say to him, I have sinned not merely against heaven, but in thy sight. And still more ready is he to lower himself before his Maker; without any reserve or any excuse, without dissembling or cloaking his transgressions, he unfolds the whole of their dark catalogue to his FATHER in heaven. With a lowly, penitent, and obedient heart he pours out his soul in sorrowful confession. On bended knee and with a broken, contrite spirit he echoes the cry of the royal mourner of Israel: Mine iniquity will I not hide. "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." I have left undone the things which I ought to have done. I have done the things which I ought not to have done. There is no health in me. "I have sinned against the LORD. I have sinned *against the Lord.*"

The last clause of the text suggests a second sign of true repentance as distinguished from its many counterfeits. The sin is chiefly bewailed because it has grieved GOD. "I have sinned against the LORD." These words, brethren, are very remarkable, if we consider the circumstances under which they were spoken.

A very heavy penalty had just been denounced against David by Nathan, the prophet of JEHOVAH. "I will raise up evil against thee, saith the LORD, because thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and

hast taken his wife to be thy wife . . . the sword shall never depart from thine house." Here, to a man of David's temperament, were gathered into one dark heap the greatest earthly troubles. He felt even for the death of a disobedient child, he used such touching words in mourning over the reprobate who had insulted his grey hairs and brought misery to his home, saying of the rebellious, godless Absalom, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Surely, a man who was so wrapped up in his family was not likely to be unaffected by that stern punishment which the Almighty had inflicted. Surely he, above *all* others, would not weigh lightly that heavy sentence which was to change his happy home into a scene of continual discord, which was to raise up against him enemies from the midst of his own household, which was to send him forth from the hill of Zion which he loved, into a lonely homeless exile. No, brethren, David felt all these calamities. His heart no doubt was pierced by them as with a sharp two-edged sword; and yet alike in the words of the text and in the whole Psalm they appear to be entirely forgotten. They are, as it were, overshadowed by a still darker cloud. "I have sinned *against the Lord*." "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in *Thy* sight." "I have sinned against the LORD"—against my kind, loving FATHER. "Cast me not away from *Thy* Presence: and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again: and stablish me with Thy free Spirit."

Here, brethren, we have a touchstone to which we may bring our penitence, if we desire to understand whether or no it is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT.

There may be abundance of sorrow after sin, and yet

no true repentance for sin. When the drunkard has wasted his strength and squandered his fortune, unless he is mad he will be sorry for his folly. When the thief is dragged from his home to pay the penalty of his crime in the lonely prison, he will naturally be filled with sorrow and self-reproaches. When the parent who has neglected his children is reaping the harvest of his carelessness in their extravagance and profligacy, he will, of course, regret the feeble way in which he discharged the responsibilities of a father. The youth who is disgraced in the sight of his fellows, the girl whose character is blighted, may, and doubtless will, shed abundance of bitter tears. The poor sinner, when he feels the lash of the Almighty Judge already descending upon him, when he thinks of the agony of that dreary abode wherein no ray of hope can enter, when the punishment of sin has thus become a reality to his heart, he may curse the madness with which his life has been wasted: he may cry, like Esau, with an exceeding bitter cry, "Hast Thou not a blessing for me, even for me also, O my FATHER?" and yet in all these wails of despair there may be no true repentance.

In *all* the cases which I have sketched there may be no sorrow for having grieved the LORD, no tears because His law has been broken, no heartfelt confession, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

But go, brethren, to any real Christian in the time of *his* humiliation, and ask him what is the cause of his greatest sorrow, when the devil has broken down his defences, and through that opened breach has poured the long train of evils into his heart. He will tell us that it is not the worldly loss, though that is hard to bear, not the contempt of his fellow-men, though of that he is not forgetful, no, not the fear of hell itself which is the

bitterest drop in his cup of agony, but the thought that he has offended a loving FATHER, that he has crucified his Saviour afresh, that he has grieved the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD. It is this which oppresses his soul in his hour of penitence, it is this which causes him to abhor himself as in dust and ashes when the graves of past sins are opened, and one after another of their dread inhabitants are appearing before him. In plain words, brethren, though GOD in His mercy often employs the reproach of man, or worldly shame, or fear of hell as instruments by which to lead us to repentance, He never leaves the soul which has been given up unto His gracious discipline until by the power of the HOLY GHOST He has taught it to echo the cry of the royal mourner of Israel, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned"; yea, I have sinned against the LORD.

Thus, brethren, have I set before you marks of real repentance. Have you ever repented? Have you so repented as to humble yourself before GOD and without any excuse acknowledge yourself a helpless, guilty sinner? Have you so repented as to humble yourself before man, to acknowledge to those against whom you have sinned the evil word or evil deed by which *they* have been injured? Have you so repented as to feel sorry for your sin because it has grieved your *Saviour*?

It is quite possible to give up some of our evil deeds without ever having repented of those sins. When you were young, perhaps, you broke that fifth commandment. To that sin you are now no longer tempted. The parents whose hearts you saddened, whose last years you embittered by your disobedience, are now at rest. No longer can your angry passions disturb their peace. But your sin was against GOD. Have you ever felt it as against GOD? Have you ever repented as in His sight? Or again, you are now settled in life. Those

early lusts of the flesh no longer tempt you—you are now thoroughly respectable ; but that impure act, which the world calls “sowing your wild oats,” that sin was against God. It is recorded in God’s Book of remembrance. Have you ever repented of it as in His sight ? Has it cost a single tear ?

O men and brethren, our whole life is crowded with evil ; our sins compass us about. They are more in number than the hairs of our head. Let us awake from our dreams of self-satisfaction and false peace. Let us allow ourselves time to drag out our sins from their long closed hiding-places : the sins of childhood ; sins of youth ; sins of riper years ; sins against God ; sins against man.

Men and brethren, let us be honest. Down on our knees let us tell them all to that Saviour Whom David longed to see but never saw on earth. Let us beseech *Him* to make us really sorry, to blot out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions : sins of thought, sins of word, sins of deed, sins that we can remember, sins that we have forgotten. Let us beseech Him to wash all away in His own most precious Blood. There, before His Cross, let us kneel, day by day, till we can see His love and realize His pardon, till His own blessed peace streams into our souls, and we have learnt, in our own experience, the happiness which follows on a hearty repentance and humble trust in the Redeemer—till we can say with the Psalmist of old, “Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”

“I said, I will confess my sins unto the LORD, and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.”

IV

THE NEED OF LIGHT

“Lord, that our eyes may be opened.”

S. MATT. XX. 33.

THIS prayer is suited for all sorts and conditions of men. It is needed by the sinner as he stands, all unconscious, on the brink of everlasting ruin ; and it is a petition for the holiest and most saintly of God’s children, as they wait on the brink of Jordan’s stream, racked, it may be, with pain, and shrinking from the severance of the ties which bind them to those whom they love dearer than life itself. It is a cry to the Everlasting FATHER, when heart and flesh are failing, that the chariots of fire may be revealed, and the band of ministering angels, by whom the spirit is to be borne into everlasting bliss, may be manifested ; and, above all, that He may be seen Whom to know is life eternal.

By how many, I wonder, has the prayer been uttered, either in the letter or in the spirit ? How many in that great congregation who have worshipped here have said in the letter, I repeat it, or in the spirit, “LORD, that I may receive my sight”—LORD, open my eyes ? God knows.

Last Sunday they were asked to do this, but the idea that hearing a sermon involves a responsibility is an idea which numbers even of professing Christians have never grasped. No word of God, however feebly it may have been uttered, can ever return unto Him void. For every sermon the account shall be rendered in that day when

the books are opened, and the Judge is seated on His throne. The question then will be, not "Who preached to you?" but, "What was the message of GOD, and what was the text, and what was the answer of thy soul to the loving GOD Who spake to thee?"

There is nothing, I think, more awful, in the right sense of the word "awe-ful," than to hear a clergyman thanked for "a beautiful sermon," when, if any word of that sermon were according to the mind of GOD, the person to whom it was preached, and who enjoyed it, is in reality himself under its condemnation. It is awful how men and women with a certain amount of Christianity are trifling with eternal verities. But some, I doubt not—GOD grant that it may have been many—some have been saying from their heart, "LORD, that my eyes may be opened."

Now, dear brethren, there is great need of caution here, for we live surrounded, as we are told, by principalities and powers of evil. Satan, the great adversary, is going about ever seeking whom he can devour; and, just as the blind man in the story of old was hindered when he would have run after JESUS CHRIST in order that his vision might be restored, so we may rest assured that we shall not be allowed to draw near to the Fountain of light and life and blessing without many weighty hindrances being thrown in our way. And I purpose, by the help of the HOLY SPIRIT, to direct your attention this morning to one or two at least of these hindrances.

May GOD the HOLY GHOST, Who knows each secret of your hearts, each longing after a higher life, and each desire to please that LORD Who was crucified for you on Calvary—may that Blessed Spirit so guide my words and so open your hearts that the devices of Satan may be defeated, and many a soul be brought into the glorious light of GOD's revealed truth!

First, then, we read in the Gospel as our Blessed LORD appeared to His disciples in that upper room at Jerusalem, though He came with words of blessing and of peace, though He came with the pierced hands and the wounded side again to claim their confidence, that at first they were terrified and affrighted. And we read in the Old Testament history that, when the great type of JESUS CHRIST was going to overcome all the cruelty and evil of his brethren by an act of surpassing love, he began by making himself strange unto them. So oft-times is it in the dealings of the Divine Master with the soul that has said, "LORD, that my eyes may be opened." For instance, we have perhaps been longing to see clearly that GOD has forgiven us. We understand it with our head ; we know that the Blood that was shed upon Calvary cleanses from all sin. We know that GOD'S people are safe in their LORD, and are at peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST. But we feel none of that inward peace or joy ourselves, and we long that a communication of that blessing may be vouchsafed unto us, and so we pray to our LORD. Or it may be that we have heard of the power of JESUS CHRIST in delivering men from evil. We have been told that greater is He that is with us than all the powers of evil that are against us, and that whatever may be our peculiar temptations, of temper, or to indolence, or sloth, or whatever it may be, CHRIST has the power to crush the evil, to sanctify us entirely—body, soul, and spirit—and to present us without spot or stain of sin before the Eternal FATHER. We are longing either for acceptance or for sanctification, and we have said, it may be for years, this prayer, LORD, that I may receive my sight, and see clearly the power and the love of my LORD.

But, instead of matters improving, everything seems to go wrong with us. We cannot pray, and our temper

is worse than ever. We seem, even while we are pleading with GOD, more than usually tempted with wandering thoughts. Everything seems to us as if we were mere hypocrites, and as if we were only bringing down upon ourselves wrath instead of blessing by any language addressed to the mercy-seat of heaven.

Let us try to see the meaning of this dealing of our LORD JESUS CHRIST with us. He knows perfectly well that if we had a certain amount of success at this crisis of our life, if we gained a little mastery over our besetting sins, we should be so buoyed up that we should soon become confident in ourselves, and never really submit and kneel down at His feet to receive the pardon that He alone can give, or to obtain the mastery over evil which can only be permanent in so far as it is vouchsafed by Himself. It is, in fact, very much in the same way that a human physician deals with his patient. A man, for example, has been long ill; stimulants of different kinds have become almost a necessity to him; he feels that it is impossible for him to exist without them; and whenever he has taken them—I am not speaking of drunkenness now—whenever he has taken them he can do much more work, and he feels more equal to the various emergencies of his life, whatever it may be. But the physician says to him, “That very feeling which these stimulants give you is doing you harm”—I am not speaking now about teetotalism—“whatever acts in this way upon your constitution is radically wrong, and all that patching it up for a few minutes or an hour or two hours is simply making the mischief more permanent, and the time that will be required for your recovery more prolonged. The only hope for you is to have a thorough radical improvement in your constitution.” You cannot fail, I think, to perceive the meaning of the illustration.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST knows that we cannot really

be happy till we have found out that we are nothing, that we are utterly guilty, and helpless, and lost, and undone. And therefore the kindest thing He can do is to teach us this lesson by the bitter experience of utter failure, that so we may be driven in spite of ourselves to that prayer which is never uttered in vain :

“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !”

So the practical lesson is to go on with the prayer of the blind man who cast his garments behind him, and though the people tried to hinder him, determined not to rest till JESUS had stood still, till his eyes were opened, and the blessing for which he craved had been vouchsafed.

Then, secondly, there is another most important lesson. There is nothing that we admire so much as a proud man. The world respects pride ; it despises vanity—petty little vanities—but pride is a grand thing. The man who does not waver when he has once spoken, the man who never humbles himself but stands up like some great mountain in the midst of his fellows, is respected, and he gains power and influence. People are afraid of him.

In the kingdom of grace all this is altered. The man who wills to be proud, the Bible says, is fighting against God, and, sooner or later, we know how that struggle will end. God, it says, resists the proud. He resists him, fights against him for his own good, defeats him again and again, and if he rises up from the dust still unhumiliated, again God uses His power. God does this in love, mind ! not in the mere human way of struggling for mastery, but because the Eternal One knows

that it is an impossibility for grace to be given to any man except he is humble. GOD can only give grace, help, strength, and power to the humble. You cannot fill a vessel until it is empty. It is no use. If a vessel is full of self, self-satisfaction, self-complacency, GOD Almighty Himself cannot fill it with divine grace. And so it is very important, when we are praying for an Epiphany of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, that we should humble ourselves, and put ourselves aside to the very utmost of our power by the help of the HOLY SPIRIT.

For example, we have been praying to GOD Almighty to open our eyes, and GOD has some new set of truths to teach us in answer to our prayer, something to teach us that we have not really known before. Perhaps we have been Churchmen all our life, leading a watchful life of self-denial and self-restraint. We have been careful in our preparations for Communion, and careful in our thanksgivings afterwards. We have been watchful, it may be, about our confessions, and so forth. But something, we have felt, has still been wanting, and we have been led by the HOLY SPIRIT to pray the prayer of the text. Now, any one who has studied human nature knows that it is intensely difficult at that crisis of his spiritual history for a real Churchman to submit himself to the plain, simple foundation-truth of JESUS CHRIST crucified. Again and again persons have said to me, "Do you mean to tell me that all these years when I have been trying to obey the LORD GOD, when I have been watchful about my prayers and my Communions, never neglecting a means of grace—do you mean to tell me that all these years have been wasted, and that I am to begin again at the very beginning, just like the poor heathen that have never heard of CHRIST? I cannot believe it."

Brethren, it is hard to believe this. It is true, too,

that every act of real earnest work for GOD has been acknowledged by GOD. Every habit that you have formed of mastery over self will be found useful in the future. Every bit of that self-discipline, the preparations and the thanksgivings too, will come in hereafter to help in building up the temple acceptable to GOD. But there is a little bit of GOD'S Gospel that you have never laid hold of; you have never done the first work, which is to believe on Him Whom GOD hath sent. When the people came to CHRIST, and asked what they should do to please GOD, they were told, "This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." Trust in Him. Hide yourself in Him. CHRIST is made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. GOD gives you the Saviour, and He tells you that our dear LORD, by His death and rising again, has so opened the kingdom of heaven to you who are baptized into Him, that you may hide yourselves in Him, that you may shelter, as it were, behind Him, and so stand accepted in the Beloved. That seems so simple, and yet it takes a few days of looking up to JESUS CHRIST, thinking of Him, and praying to Him, and looking away from self—a few days before the eyes are opened to see it.

It is often a very great stumbling-block in the way of real Churchmen to be brought face to face with this truth, and unless they are changed so as to become like little children they cannot receive it. I remember seeing in a great mission one after another coming and learning that little simple bit of GOD'S Gospel, and then going back with new life to their Communions, and with new power to every Christian duty and to every means of grace.

And so, on the other side, we may take it, a soul has known the peace and the joy of believing, has known what

it is to thank GOD that its sins are washed away in the precious Blood, and has known what it is to do this, not with excited utterance, but with calm, confident assurance based, not on feeling, but on the Word of the Living GOD that can never be found false. This soul has known what it is to be at peace with GOD, and has rejoiced in that peace, it may be, for many a year ; and then GOD in His love desires to lead that soul onward, to teach it the great sacramental side of the Church's instruction, to teach it something about the Body of CHRIST, to teach it about the feeding of the soul with the living Bread and the water that flows from beneath the Throne of GOD and the Lamb, and to teach it what is the right position to adopt to GOD's ministers, not merely to the one or two whom we personally like, but to every minister of GOD who has been specially ordained for doing His work. Well, all this, that we call "Church teaching," has now to be received, and the soul shrinks from it. The man to whom this truth is taught often speaks thus : "All my party will think that I have become a Ritualist, or a Puseyite, or a Romanist. I shall be dishonoured amongst those who looked up to me as a teacher in Israel. I know the everlasting Gospel ; I know that GOD loves me, and if I cannot always feel it, I make myself feel it ; and if I die, I will cry as I die, Thanks be to GOD for the precious Blood that cleanses from sin ; and you shall not rob me of it by talking to me about self-examination, and by all your teaching about your Holy Communions. It is all a delusion ; I know what GOD has taught me." If that soul continues proud, I will not say that it is lost—though I have seen a very bitter end come to the proud—but it never goes forward, it makes no progress, there is no growth in grace, and no influence over others. It has a name to live, but in the sight of GOD it is almost dead.

But when the soul comes like a little child and says, LORD, open my eyes, then GOD Almighty pours in these satisfying truths : that we are not merely forgiven, but that we can be made holy ; that GOD loves to pour new life into us, so that the old nature shall be gradually driven out, as darkness vanishes before the early morn ; that GOD comes to live in us by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, so that we may become not merely what are called "saved men," but strong men, men able to influence others as they pursue their onward course, men who by their very lives shed abroad an influence for all that is good, and pure, and holy. Oh, the growth in grace of a soul drawn into evangelical light, and then humbling itself to receive what GOD has taught in His holy Church !

Dear brethren, there is not time to dwell longer on the subject ; I would only warn you, whilst using this prayer, to beware of the spirit of that proud captain of the host of the King of Syria of whom you have read in the ancient story. Let one of GOD's humblest servants at least teach to you that lesson, and you can hear it well-nigh in every church that you may enter in this great metropolis. You remember the story. He came in all his barbaric pomp and majesty from the Syrian court to the prophet of the LORD, and that leprous captain of the host stood at the door of Elisha, and sent up to ask what he must do to be recovered of his leprosy. And his anger was stirred within him because he was not recognized as a great and mighty man—a man not to be treated as the ordinary poor would be treated. And Elisha sent to him the message, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." And then he went away in a rage. He thought of those rivers, Abana and Pharpar, in the grand old city of Damascus, and said, What ! have I been brought all this distance, and then told to do a little

thing like that?—to wash in that little stream, when I have left behind the deep-rolling current of those Syrian streams? No! But his servants came to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?”

My brethren, if GOD asked a great thing of you to-day as the price of everlasting joy with the saints and angels for ever hereafter, you would lay down your money—even the most covetous man in the church this morning—though you never really denied yourself a single fraction of your money for CHRIST all these many years that you have lived: you would tell out cheque after cheque, sovereign after sovereign—O GOD, anything to be sure of heaven hereafter. And GOD—by the voice of His prophet, to-day, for every man standing in the Name of GOD, properly ordained, is a witness and prophet of the Unseen GOD—gives you this answer, Humble thyself, trust GOD if He seems to be making Himself strange to you, and pray morning, noon, and night, at every pause from the whirl of the outer life, GOD, for CHRIST’S sake, grant that my eyes may be opened.

V

THE LARGER VISION

“Lord, that our eyes may be opened.”—S. MATT. xx. 33.

“It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”—2 S. PET. ii. 21.

THAT our eyes may be opened.” It is almost impossible to open the Bible without finding passages in which the responsibility of spiritual enlightenment is pressed upon our notice. Hear the word of the Living GOD, of which we have been told in the first lesson of this morning, that no utterance of His can ever return to Him empty and void. Take heed, saith GOD, how you hear, for whosoever uses what he has, to him shall more be given; whosoever uses not what is given, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Seemeth to have! In the sight of GOD a man only possesses really the knowledge that he uses. If a man hears My words and believes not, said CHRIST, I judge him not; he that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, does not act upon what he is taught, there is “One that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.”

Once more. “See,” said the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or rather the Blessed Spirit speaking through him, “see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not in olden time who refused Him

that spake on earth"—if Jerusalem was laid low, and the Temple devastated, and Israel scattered as a wandering race over the face of the universe—"if they escaped not . . . who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." CHRIST our King, the Alpha and the Omega, the Being that liveth, and Who died, but Who is alive for evermore, has heard each word that was preached, each warning that was uttered, and each encouragement that ran home into the heart of the people to whom His prophet was sent.

Now, dear brethren, this truth is quite obvious, if we look at it for a moment, in earthly matters. Every one knows that the mere repetition of a feeling, unless the will is brought to bear upon that emotion, so that out of it is developed a habit of practical action—every one knows that the tendency of that reiterated emotion is to deaden the being, to paralyse the will, and to drive the man into a state of almost hopeless helplessness. Every one knows how the very man who faints at the sight of an operation may become in the course of years so accustomed to it, that he can smile and talk carelessly though surrounded by cries of agony from suffering patients. A man may live utterly unmoved in the midst of the most heartrending scenes, hearing the cries of the agonized and watching their unceasing woe, until he may come at last to revel in the midst of it, when a stranger would be stirred with an emotion too big for utterance at the sight of these things. Any doctor in London who has any experience can illustrate this principle—the danger of enlightenment not producing practical action. He could tell you what is the secret of the malady of one after another who come to them for advice. The patients feel weak ; they require something to carry them through the day ; they crave for the stimulant, the

subtle drug, or the brandy, whichever it may be. The physician says, "Ruin, sooner or later—stimulants at irregular times away from your food—ruin—I can do nothing." Another patient comes. The physician says, "You have only one hope of ever making full proof of your earthly ministry in that great position which you occupy. If you are obliged to dine out you must have a rule of life, a certain amount that you may drink, or those dishes that you like so much must be passed untouched, if you are to be fit for work all the year round." And the patients—so doctors tell me—the patients say, "We ought to ; you are quite right" ; but they return to the old stimulant and the accustomed self-indulgence. The great physician—I am speaking of the human physician—has to stand as it were in the midst of this mighty London to see the patients who come to him year by year becoming enfeebled, until at last they lose the very power of trusting in themselves, and sink down into a degenerate and enfeebled old age. It were better for them not to have known the right way than after it had been taught them by God's great teacher—for next to the preacher ranks the human physician—to have turned from the wise commandment delivered unto them.

We pass out of the natural into the spiritual realm—the GOD of nature is the GOD of the spiritual kingdom. We have not two GODS ; GOD, Who sends the human physician for the body, sends likewise the spiritual physician for the soul ; and when we pass into the spiritual kingdom, how fearfully is the truth of the text exemplified ! I will not speak this morning of that on which I have often dwelt, that aspect of the subject which comes before us when we think of the Living GOD speaking, and the creature using its free-will to fight against GOD and to say, "I know I *ought*, but I *can't*, and I *won't*." I will

not dwell on that side. We will carry on the thought that has occupied us so far. In the spiritual kingdom over which GOD Almighty rules there are eternal principles, such as can be seen in the world of nature. Just as all science reveals to us the general order, the almost invariable sequence of cause and effect, so the principles of the spiritual kingdom are established on an equally—to say the least of it, an equally—firm foundation.

Now, what is the law of the spiritual kingdom? It is this—that if prayer ascends to heaven, blessing comes down; if a Church prays, the HOLY GHOST is outpoured; every Sunday that we pray, the power of GOD descends by a fixed law in answer to that petition. A father and mother cannot pray for their son without some influence entering the heart of that boy for the time, whether he yield to it or not. The HOLY SPIRIT humbles Himself, so to speak, to be at the call of the prayer. Now for our thought. If when this holy commandment is revealed, if when the eyes are thus opened there is not an honest response (to use the words of our LORD, the “honest heart” responding to the full revelation, whatever it be), do you not see how a person may be living much above the average of other Christians, and yet relatively to his light immeasurably below them?

Let me illustrate what I mean. We have been brought up, perhaps, some of us, in a Christian home. The father or the mother or the sisters have prayed for us continually. We received the answer to the prayer: we saw glimpses of a higher life; there came wafted to us from the far-off land the breath, as it were, of the Living Spirit. We felt what we *could* be, what we *might* become, what could be done by GOD working in us. But instead of bringing the strong will to bear upon the feelings, and to train ourselves into habits of real response and of surrender to GOD, we trifled and dallied

with it. We were not so bad as many, but we failed to answer to the call, we would not say, *Speak, LORD, and then Thy servant will hear.* We go on in life, we come into such a parish as this, either as the clergyman of the parish, or one of the congregation. Every week at least a hundred—I think nearer a thousand—prayers go up for every human being who comes into a church in the parish of S. Peter. People meet together for no other purpose than to pray for every one of us, clergymen and congregation. And the result is that these prayers are answered. Meltings of consciences, whether I hear of them in this world or not, must be experienced by numbers who would be angry if I suggested to them that their hearts had been touched in this way. It must be so, because *GOD* has said, “*Ask, and ye shall receive.*” So the eyes are opened, and we respond—whether it be the clergyman or the people—we respond to a certain extent, but not to the full call of Almighty *GOD*. We do something, but not all that *GOD* would help us to do, and wishes us to do. So we rise up in the judgement of the world, and think that we are better than other people, and infinitely more holy, but in *GOD*’s sight we are disobedient to the holy commandment that has been delivered to us—not responding to the call, living below our privileges, and disobedient to the heavenly vision. Now, imagine one of us, preacher or congregation, passing out into that world where, as the *LORD JESUS CHRIST* says in one of those passages that I read to you, “there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. . . . Take heed what ye hear.” We have passed out into that world; we find that every appeal was from *GOD*; we find that every fresh answer to the prayer, “*LORD, that our eyes may be opened,*” was a new responsibility. We find that we have been living far above the average

of Christians, but far below the call of the Eternal FATHER to our individual soul. Can you not imagine yourself in that land of light and revelation and eternal verities, crying with a bitter cry, "Would GOD I had never lived in that parish or entered that church! Would GOD the clergyman had never knelt at the Holy Table, and pleaded there the Passion and the Death of the Eternal GOD Who was crucified those hundreds of years ago and died for me! Would GOD that nobody had prayed for me, for then I should only have lived a good average sort of communicant, Christian kind of life, just as the rest of my neighbours, no worse, no better! Would GOD no one had ever prayed for me, and then I should not have been disobedient to the holy commandment that was revealed in answer to that Epiphany prayer, LORD, that my eyes may be opened!" O Blessed Spirit, give power to the words, and drive Thy message home this morning!

Now, brethren, what must be the practical conclusion of the whole matter? Must it not be what that GOD is teaching us in the Gospel for the day? First of all, saith CHRIST to us—what His Mother said at that feast in Cana of Galilee—"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Does GOD tell you that you are to believe in JESUS CHRIST? Rest not day or night till you can say, "I know in Whom I have believed." Does He tell you to do that work? Do it. Does He tell you that you ought to go to Communion? Begin to prepare for it to-day. Does He tell you that you must give up the employment that is ruining your soul by robbing you of the time for prayer and the study of GOD'S Word? Begin to-day to pray, and look out for the opportunity of altering your condition; go on trying to get rid of it till GOD shall answer the prayer and make the way clear. Does He tell

you that that cord must be cut which, if you should die to-night, would bind you to the devil and his angels for ever? Cut it to-night. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Submit your mind to the HOLY GHOST. If He has a new truth to teach you, though all your relations and friends laugh at you for becoming an evangelical, or becoming a Churchman, or whatever it may be, do it in the Name of the Living GOD Who has opened your eyes. The responsibility of spiritual enlightenment gives mighty power to the words of the Gospel. You may know GOD's will by waiting upon Him prayerfully for two or three weeks to ascertain what it is. "Whatsoever He"—CHRIST, not I, mind—"saith unto you, do it."

The second and last lesson is given in the same Gospel. Do not, when you have obeyed CHRIST in one point, and done that, stop the prayer, LORD, that my eyes may be opened. Go on praying. Many people get one answer to one prayer; perhaps they learn to believe in CHRIST, perhaps to give up some bad habit, or to go more regularly to the Holy Communion; then they stop praying, LORD, that my eyes may be opened. But this must be our prayer continually to the very end of our lives, dear brethren. "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine." At the beginning the world provides her best, and then when men have well drunk, that which is worse—old age and feeble health, and friends leaving you alone to fight the battle of life—"when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." CHRIST keeps the good wine to the end.

Every year we receive a new revelation, as we study the Bible more carefully, and pray for spiritual enlightenment more truly. Each bit of the Creed gradually comes out—perhaps, first, CHRIST the Eternal SON and the dear Elder Brother; then GOD the FATHER; then the HOLY GHOST living in us to give light and strength and power;

then the Holy Catholic Church ; then the Communion of Saints ; then, onward still, " LORD, that our eyes may be opened " ; onward still, new visions of glory as we read the Holy Book upon our knees, and new insight into that spiritual kingdom.

There came once the sovereign of Israel to the ancient prophet, and in the Name of the Living God, Elisha said unto Joash, Thou shalt have power and blessing from heaven ; take that bow and these arrows in thine hand, and according to thy faith in God, shoot these arrows ; open the window eastward and begin. And the man sent the arrow once out of that open window, and twice and thrice it was discharged. Then his faith failed. My brethren, open thy window eastward to the land of light and glory ; eastward, where CHRIST thy King was born in great humiliation ; eastward, where He shall be seen coming surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand angels. Open thy window eastward, and in the power of the Living God resolve to-day, Whatsoever my God tells me, shall be done, and, as I do it, I will pray even till my dying hour, LORD, that my eyes may be opened. Mine eyes shall be opened more to see the invisible kingdom, opened to see across the Jordan, to watch those there waiting, waiting for us—the blessed ones who died in CHRIST ; perhaps little children or the dear mother who prayed for us long ago ; the faithful ones waiting to welcome us after the fight, waiting to watch our joy as the prayer of the text is at last accomplished, and our eyes are opened to see the invisible glory.

VI

THE CALL OF SUFFERING

“Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.”—EZEK. xxiv. 15, 16.

THOSE of us, my brethren, who gathered round the Holy Table at our earliest Celebration this morning must have been touched by that appeal which was then made for our Christian intercession. He for whom the appeal was made was probably known to none of us here; or at most, to only one or two. Many hundred miles he was away from us. But there was something so intensely touching in those simple words, “Your prayers are asked for one who has been suddenly bereaved; for a husband who has lost his wife.”

Two days ago, he was happy, and thanking God for the joy of his home. To-night, he is there in his lonely desolation! Comfort on earth there was none. The only sense of comfort was in Him to Whom as a Christian people we appealed this morning for one who, though a stranger to ourselves, was linked with us by the ties of Christian brotherhood, a member of the great Church of CHRIST, joined with us in the fellowship of the saints.

The first lesson for this evening seems, as it were, the key-note of all such sudden desolations. The voice of the LORD GOD came to the prophet Ezekiel saying,

“Son of man”—as if GOD had said: I know thee; I know that human heart; I know the trial with which I am about to visit thee—“Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.”

There is something so intensely Fatherly in those words of the Almighty: obliged, for reasons that we shall see afterwards, to lay desolate the home of the prophet, and yet, so intensely feeling for him, as GOD ever feels for those who are in sorrow. “Son of man, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes.”

To the world, Ezekiel’s wife was as nothing; it was not the custom of the prophets to talk of themselves or their family life. But GOD knew the strength and the joy that His prophet had drawn from that loving sympathy. “I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.”

Then follows that strange command: “Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet” (i.e., omit the customary signs of mourning among the Jews), “and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men”; partake not of the funeral feast (meats) that will be offered to thee in loving sympathy. Thou art not to mourn; thou art the prophet of GOD.

Thou must mourn, but let the mourning be hidden in thine own inmost heart. Let no weeping of a broken spirit mar the grand majestic chorus of the prophet’s voice. Be still; speak only the word that shall be given thee to speak.

Ezekiel was a true prophet. It was in the morning that the sudden message came from the Most High. That morning, he went out with an aching heart; all

that long day, he testified for the Unseen Jehovah ; and then at night he came home to that desolate dwelling on the shores of Chebar, and then gave back the spirit of her whom he loved more than his own life, to her FATHER and his FATHER. That night his wife died.

And then, in the morning, he was seen standing there, silent, refusing the outward garb of woe, as the people gathered round him, startled for a time from their thoughtless levity ; obliged, for a moment at any rate, to draw near to the prophet to whose message they had so long been deaf ; asking, with a silly curiosity, Tell us, tell us, what does it mean ? Why are you doing this ? We are all of us curious—interested. Wilt thou not tell us—this and this and this ? Why not eat the funeral meats ? Why no sign of mourning ? Tell us !

Oh, what a picture of a world that can find in man's deepest woe only a subject for its idle gossip ! Tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so.

And then came the message. Just as, in after years, the true Son of Man turned round to those daughters of Jerusalem, saying, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" ; just as God sent not His Son in festal garb to proclaim the sad message of a coming woe ; as Christ Himself first became the Man of Sorrows, and then stood in the midst of them, sadly proclaiming the coming doom : so it was that Ezekiel, pale as some statue, with a broken heart, and yet not one tear flowing down the cheek, spake to the people in the Name of God.

"Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, . . . and ye shall do as I have done." The day is coming, when you shall be visited by the Almighty with a calamity so terrible that it shall dry up the fountain of your tears. You shall see the Holy

City devastated ; your sons and daughters carried into captivity ; and yet, you shall find it impossible to weep. You shall gaze with a sad and silent sorrow on those devastated walls of the Holy City. As I am silent in my sorrow, so also, I tell you in the Name of my God, the sorrow that is coming on you shall be a sorrow that shall find no relief in tears.

And then God, with His loving, Fatherly Heart, knowing what Ezekiel was suffering, seems to have allowed him, for three years, to be comparatively silent. A few prophecies to the Amorites and Moabites, and so forth—nations in whom Ezekiel was not so intensely interested as he was in his own fatherland—prophecies that did not tear his very heart to pieces, as the woes which he was pronouncing against Jerusalem had desolated his spirit—these are all that we find recorded. God knew what the strain was, to that bereaved husband, in that sad preaching ; and so God gave him time to rest. He ever gives His people time to rest, in the midst of their trials and sorrows. For three years he was silent ; and then, again, the people came, and a new message was revealed.

My brethren, the superficial student of the Bible may speak of our God in this history as a hard Master. He makes this grand mistake ; he limits his ideas to the three-score years and ten of this lower life : whereas God has eternity for which to provide !

God knew that, bitter as was the stroke which had fallen upon Ezekiel, he would a thousand times rather be used as God's prophet, than have all earthly joy continued for the full term of mortal life. And God knew that that dear wife would willingly die, if she could help on her husband's work. So God gathered her to the rest of Paradise, and gave to Ezekiel the time to rest, to gather in new power, while in silent meditation he communed

with the spirit that had passed away into the quiet land beyond the grave.

The story which we have been reading, my brethren, is the teaching of the whole volume of Inspiration. It is the teaching that was given by the Life of Sacrifice, by the Death on Calvary, of the Incarnate GOD.

Ezekiel was a prophet. What mean we by the word "prophet"? Not merely a man who foretells things to come; that is but a part of his office. The prophet, as the Greek word shows, is one who speaks for another. In the Book of Exodus, Aaron is called the "prophet" of Moses; he spoke for him. Moses thought, and Aaron clothed his thoughts in human words, and uttered them to Israel.

The prophets received from above some strange inspiration which it is impossible accurately to define; they received an inspiration from the world of spirits, and clothed it in the imperfect medium of human language; they gave out the true thought, however feebly expressed. GOD could provide the word as well as the thought, to those whom He had made His mouth-piece. The prophets spoke for GOD.

And why were you and I baptized? Why did CHRIST die for us on that Cross? Why were we made members of the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the peculiar people?

Open your Bibles, and you shall find the reason, in S. Peter's first Epistle, "That ye may shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light"; that we might be mouth-pieces for GOD; that our life, our words, our deeds, our suffering, might be ever speaking for the Unseen and Eternal JEHOVAH.

You and I are "prophets," called by GOD to speak for Him to a fallen humanity. There are millions who

have never been baptized ; millions who have never been grafted into the Body of CHRIST. We are, at best—even if we include all who are baptized—but a small army in the midst of heathendom.

And of those who have been baptized and made God's children, how few comparatively have realized their adoption ! How few there are who have given their hearts to their LORD ! How few have been taught by the HOLY SPIRIT to see the meaning of that Blood-shedding on Calvary ! Look round on the baptized ; look into your own hearts. What have you realized of the meaning of your Baptism ?

You are a member of CHRIST, the child of GOD, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Have you realized it ? Have you felt the meaning of "the forgiveness of sins" ? Do you know what is meant by those words : "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins" ? Are you at peace with GOD, through JESUS CHRIST ? If, next Sunday morning, those who love you are asking us to pray for them because their home has been bereaved—if one of you should be in another world before next Sunday, and we have to pray that GOD may comfort those who love you—where will your soul be ?

Oh, how few, how very few, have learnt even the first principles of the doctrine of CHRIST ! How few are even at peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST ! And yet, that is only the beginning.

But whether we have realized it or not—whatever our standpoint may be ; whether we are merely baptized, and content, like selfish creatures, with knowing that we have been forgiven once, without trying to advance in the Christian life, to grasp new principles and to grow up into the fullness of CHRIST, or whether we are struggling on (painfully and wearily, perhaps, amid many faults and

disappointments, yet still struggling on) for the prize of our high calling—whatever be our position, one thing is true, and will be felt by us to be true for all eternity. It is this : GOD has separated you—whatever your past history, by the mere fact of your Baptism you were separated—to witness for your GOD. You are as truly a “prophet” of the Unseen and Holy Trinity, as Ezekiel was when he was sent forth in the Name of the LORD GOD to bear witness to His people.

We are, all of us, GOD’s prophets, whether we believe it or not.

The truth which GOD would teach us, and which the Church has brought before us in our First Lesson to-night, is very parallel to the, at first, perplexing verse (*S. Luke xiv. 26*). Our LORD saw crowds coming about Him, and He looked round and said, “If any man come after 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.” Here again, the superficial student may raise a difficulty ; but any one who compares one passage with another—any one who even understands the original language—will find no difficulty in seeing what our LORD meant. He wished to teach the very same truth which, in older times, Ezekiel had taught by a parable. The dearest of all love is the love which a man feels for his wife, and that love, however real and however holy in itself, must be subordinated by the prophets of GOD to the voice of the Unseen and the Eternal.

When GOD had need of Ezekiel, he must give himself up to be used by GOD, however close might be the ties by which he was bound to this lower earth. However absorbing might be the interests of those Galilean peasants ; however interesting might be the work of the merchandise and the farm, and so forth, yet,

when the voice of GOD spake, "Come, for all things are now ready," each prophet of GOD must gird up his loins, and leave behind him the yoke of oxen, and the new piece of ground, and yield himself up to the GOD by Whom he has been redeemed.

This is no hard teaching. The whole of this lower life is but like a dream. When you and I shall wake up on the other side of that "narrow stream," the Bible tells us that this life will appear like a dream of the night when a man wakes up in the morning! And, then, what will matter the difficulty, or the discipline, or the trial, provided we have been true to the LORD GOD, Who lives and reigns, not merely in this lower earth, but in all the kingdoms of the eternal world?

We can make allowance for a poor boy just going out into the world, fancying that every idle pleasure will satisfy the deepest longings of his soul; we almost smile as we watch him going on, still fancying that what the world calls "pleasure" will make him really happy! We have not one hard thought for him; we are only sorry that he has wasted so many precious years; we know how he will regret it in after-life: but there is no hard thought for him.

But it is a little pitiable, when grown men and women such as you and I are, who are called by the Mighty GOD to love and suffer and work and speak for Him, can degrade ourselves by putting into the first place the pleasure and the money and the interests of a life that is passing away—that may be terminated at any moment! Of course, the work is to be done; the recreation is to be enjoyed: and GOD can make the recreation a real re-creation, and give to the poor tired merchant more prosperity, if only he work in submission to GOD, than if "without GOD" he shall go to bed late, and rise early, and eat the bread of carefulness. GOD

wishes us to have all the happiness which does not interfere with eternal happiness.

But, grown men and women! when GOD has given His SON to redeem us; when GOD has told us that, whatever our past life may be, He will wash away every stain, and give us strength to walk in newness of life; when GOD has separated us from millions of heathen, that we may go up and down the world and testify for Him, by our daily walk, wherever we are: there is, I say, something degrading in seeing the "prophets" of GOD with no ideas—except whether her dress is becoming, whether she is better dressed than others, or whether he has "made enough money to retire," when he may only be going to "retire" to the grave!

GOD wishes to elevate us above all these things; and GOD gives us trials and disappointments and all the manifold discipline of our earthly existence on purpose that we may be weaned from this lower life, that our home may be sought above, in the only real home, where alone the GOD Who made us knows that our heart can be satisfied.

And for fear that this should seem hard to us—for fear we should think GOD a hard Master—He sent His own SON first: He let JESUS be born in that manger and live for thirty years in that carpenter's shop, and oft-times have no place where to lay His head. He made *the* Prophet of GOD, His own well-beloved SON, live a life of trial, in order that when—for our own good and for the good of others—GOD should call *us* to suffer, as His prophets, we might bear the trial unflinchingly.

That is the idea in to-day's second lesson, and in the lesson from Ezekiel: that you and I, as prophets of GOD, must "seek *first* the kingdom of GOD"; and if trial comes, in thus seeking the glory of GOD, then, in GOD'S Name, we must bear the trial.

There are two thoughts in conclusion which suggest themselves to us. Very often God gives to His people, His true prophets, whether young or old, some great trial ; one of the infinite vicissitudes of life ; some earthly loss, bereavement, or bodily weakness, and Satan, who is always ready to accuse both God and man, comes to the child of God, and says, "You are a wretched sinner, and you deserve to be punished ; and so, God is punishing you."

That side of human suffering which is for our own good I shall not touch upon to-night. The point that I wish to bring out is this : that very often the trials which come upon us and the sorrows which we have to bear have nothing to do with our own sins, nor, except indirectly, with our own spiritual discipline.

As every prophet of God, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, only became a perfect prophet by suffering—by drinking of the cup which Jesus drained to the dregs, so, again and again, you will find, when you look back upon your past history (no one can see clearly while he is passing through the furnace, but when you look back, you shall see) that you, too, were born to be a prophet ; that as Ezekiel suffered for the sake of others, so God has allowed *you* to suffer, for the sake of some linked to you, it may be by very close ties.

We pray for our children ; we pray for those whom we love ; and the answer comes through a bankruptcy, a broken heart, an open grave, a desolated home ! We know not what it means ; but we "forbear to cry" ; and then, in the three years of silent meditation by the still waters of God's sanctuary, God teaches His prophet that the prayer is answered ; that the sorrow came in order that the child, the husband, the friend, might be saved by the suffering of the prophet. The subject is too wide for the limits of a sermon : I only leave

it with you. If you are living to God, and trying to love Him, you will often find that your heaviest sorrows will be God's answer to your prayers. Very often your heaviest trials will fall upon you not for your own sin but in virtue of that glorious office into which you have been baptized—the office of God's prophet.

The second thought also is practical. How are these trials to be met? How is the lesson of to-night to be learned? Are you to be always anticipating coming woe? If Ezekiel's sorrow falls on me, how can I bear it? If such and such a trial is given, how shall I endure it?

No, that is Satan's teaching, not God's teaching. The teaching of the Bible is this: "Give us day by day our daily bread." The manna was provided for the Israel of God, and one day at a time. He who tried to gather sufficient for the second day found that the labour had been spent in vain. Day by day; for the day! We are God's prophets; make sure of that first. Then, make sure that you grasp the Christian's privileges. And then, let there be a full and earnest yielding up of the spirit every morning to God. My God, I give myself, body, soul, and spirit, "to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee." Do Thou, my God, give me strength to do what is right. Do Thou give me grace to battle against temptation. Do Thou enable me to bear any trial that Thou mayest see fit to lay upon me.

And then, as the varied trials of life come on, as one trial after another is sent by Him with Whom we have to do, take it quietly. Do not be disheartened if, for days, this heart and flesh seem to sink under it; when earthly circumstances seem to be all going wrong; when the home is becoming more and more dreary to you, as your children have gone away from you, one after another, and you cannot feel sure that they are true

prophets of God. Do not be surprised—mark this—if, for days, you feel unable to feel or to realize God's love. Kneel down and say the prayers, even though your thoughts are wandering from the beginning to the end.

And so, in the Name of God, bring that sacrifice as the prophet of God and the priest of God, and bind it to the horns of the altar, saying, "My God, if my strength is failing, I will bear it; if my children disappoint me, I will bear it; if those for whom I have sacrificed almost my very life treat me with ingratitude, I will bear it. It will break my heart, O God, to be known as a bankrupt or a pauper, but I will bear it, my God, in Thy strength."

Never mind, even if you fail; go back to the precious Blood; ask the LORD JESUS to wash out the stain on the white robe in that Fountain which flowed from Calvary. Come back, and say, "My God, give me strength to bear it. My God, give me strength to go out amongst these young men, and to bear being laughed at. Help me to take my part with the chosen generation, the royal priesthood. Help me to tell all who are in the shop or office with me. My God, even if I fail ninety-nine times, I will rise up again."

And so, as in the Name of God you try each day to be a true prophet, God will teach you new truths. Your mind will be enlarged; your capacity for knowing CHRIST will increase. Your power to love other people and to bear unkindness, to give back good for evil and to suffer for CHRIST, will increase year by year. Instead of being the poor silly child, carried everywhere according as the wind may blow, led wherever man's opinion may guide, doing only what others do, and living as others live, only kind to those who are kind to you, only loving those who love you, only blessing those

who bless you—you will drink of the Spirit of the Crucified. You will learn that you are sent out by God, blessed by Him, in order that you may bless others. You will learn that the highest dignity of the creature is to carry out the purpose of the Creator, to be in harmony with the universe of God.

You will feel that pleasure may be very well, when we are children ; and money may be very well, before we have learnt to know the true and incorruptible riches ; but that GOD has called us to something higher : that He calls us to suffer with CHRIST, to work for CHRIST, to take our part in the great onward march of the baptized ; to take our part in the battle of the great army that is going up in the Name of GOD to save the world which Satan has enthralled.

Yes, Christian men and women, boys and girls, young and old ! make up your mind, in the Name of GOD, that you will be strong and of a good courage, to do and to bear whatever GOD may call you to do or to suffer, as the “ prophets ” of the Unseen and Eternal JEHOVAH !

VII

THE POWER OF THE LORD

“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”

ISA. lxiii. 1.

IT is not my intention to consider the context of this passage. I regard it to-day rather as the answer which, sooner or later, GOD has promised to vouchsafe to every man and woman and child who shall honestly persevere in uttering that prayer, “LORD, that our eyes may be opened.” Sooner or later, to every waiting soul, the vision of the LORD JESUS CHRIST shall assuredly be granted, because GOD, Who cannot lie, has so promised.

Let me here be clearly understood. I am not speaking now of any strange and mystic revelation of the world unseen; I am not speaking of any personal vision of JESUS CHRIST, the result, it may be, of a highly-wrought imagination, or coming simply from the delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light. I am referring now to that most calm and intelligent knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, no longer as a mere abstraction, but as a Living Person. I am referring to that turning-point—and there are many such in the experience of every real Christian—to that turning-point in the life wherein the soul lays hold, by the power of the HOLY GHOST, of this great fact, that it belongs to a living CHRIST; that the loving LORD has a direct and personal relation to it; and that

there are direct communications between its individual self—between the individual spirit I ought to say—and that living JESUS CHRIST.

I refer to that crisis—if the word be not too strong to express my meaning—that crisis of the soul's history wherein by the eye of faith, the inner eye of the soul, it passes out of the range of mere doctrines and imaginations and human teachings and human systems, and comes on earth into the immediate Presence of Him Who was born in Bethlehem and manifested, Who died and rose again and ascended into heaven, and Who Himself has declared unto us that, wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, He is present in their midst, Who has promised to every trusting heart that He will come and reveal Himself unto it.

This knowledge of JESUS CHRIST comes to men at sundry times and in divers manners. It has come in the quiet solitude of our chamber, as alone, with no eye resting upon us, we were studying the Holy Book and praying for the guidance of the Blessed Spirit. It has come, as it came in olden days, through the breaking of bread at the Holy Communion, when the LORD JESUS said to the disciples, after they had received that spiritual Food, "Peace be unto you!" It comes at some times through the feelings, at others through the understanding. It may come gradually, a little more light each week and month and year perhaps, till at last the King is seen in His living personality. Or it may come suddenly, through a sermon, or through the word of a friend. It may be burnt into our very being in the midst of one of those great crashes of the human life when we are confronted by Him Who holds in His hands the keys of the grave and of death—those times when, with the most calm and intelligent conviction, we know that it depends upon that living Being Whom we

met in that most narrow place whether the near future shall find us in the midst of that invisible world of which men talk so much but know so little. We know not on which side of the narrow door the morrow's dawn will find us: with the spirits that have passed away, or living, conscious, thanking GOD for our deliverance. In whatever way it comes—GOD lives, and the HOLY GHOST works, in the Church, to take of the things of JESUS and show them unto us, to reveal that loving Person to every soul that would seek for light. Yes! just as in the olden days the eyes of the blind were opened: it might be suddenly, so that all things were clearly manifested; it might be with a strange withholding of the full enlightenment, like the poor man who saw at first only men like trees walking; it matters not. Who is this, do you ask, that is coming to me at that turning-point of my soul's history? Who is this that is coming in His glorious apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? Who is it? Thy God, thy Saviour, "I that speak unto thee in righteousness, mighty to save."

Now, dear brethren, there is every reason why we should have confidence in this Living Person thus revealed to us. If it be true, and we know it is true, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is not merely human in His sympathies, but almighty in His power, speaking to us in this righteousness of the Eternal Godhead, mighty to save us—I say there is every reason why we should repose implicit confidence in Him; and yet the great struggle of the Christian life is to know Him; and when we know, to trust, this Living LORD. The difficulty arises from many sources. First, it is owing to our own natural infirmity, it is the tendency of all of us to stop short; to rest in secondary causes; not to press on till we have laid hold of the entire revelation,

and till we have obtained the fullness of the blessing that our GOD has for us. Let me explain what I mean.

I believe it is quite impossible for any one to undervalue one single iota of GOD's revealed truth without greivous injury to his soul. If we are too proud to receive what is called evangelical truth—if because when we were young it was presented to us in those repulsive forms which alienated our understanding and crushed all power of belief in such a caricature of religion—I do not say we shall never go to heaven, but if we refuse to receive GOD's evangelical teaching, we shall never know what is meant by rejoicing in the LORD, and never enjoy the full privileges of those who are standing firm in the liberty with which CHRIST has made them free. And on the other hand there is danger. If from fear of being unpopular, and despised as Papists or Puseyites and the like, we will not submit our will to the entire round of GOD's truth which the LORD JESUS has revealed to His bride, the Church—not speaking of the Church in the narrower sense of the clergy but of the entire body—if we have nothing to do with the truth, because the world does not love it ; if we will take certain portions that are popular, and toss aside the humbling teaching of self-examination and the acknowledgement of our sin to Almighty GOD with a penitent, lowly, humble, and obedient heart ; if we toss aside the sacramental system with all its wondrous mystery and life-giving power ; if we will have nothing to do with the grace of the Ministry and the privileges GOD gives to the whole body of the faithful through those who are set apart for that office ; if, in fact, we toss Churchmanship to the wind and sing for ever “JESUS only,” as if CHRIST were something different from His Church, the bride, and as if the Word of the LORD in one part of the Bible was not as important as

the Word of the same GOD in another part ; then we shall never—I do not say we shall not be “ saved,” for any one who believes in JESUS CHRIST really and truly will be saved—but we shall never grow up into the fullness of the stature of the manhood of CHRIST : we shall be weak, wavering, powerless beings to the very end of our lives. But, though this is true—and I cannot express it too emphatically—yet if we stop in our systems and our dogmas and our half-truths, and do not use them as the ladders by which to rise up into the Presence of the King ; if we are satisfied with having known “ the Gospel,” or being “ Churchmen,” or with whatever we like ; and if we do not struggle on in the prayer, “ LORD, open mine eyes to see Thyself coming to me, travelling in the greatness of Thy strength, glorious in Thine apparel, mighty to save me,” we shall never know even the beginning of the higher life, the life hid with CHRIST in GOD.

There is a second hindrance to knowledge of, and confidence in, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The devil is a living person, however much he may have been eliminated from our thought. GOD, Who had seen Satan from the beginning—whenever that was—the beginning of his being, GOD Almighty for our guidance has revealed to us in the Bible certain truths about Satan, and foremost amongst them is the fact of his personality. GOD, in His love, has shielded us from the full knowledge of Satan’s power, perhaps because if we knew what he was, we should all be powerless to fight against him, and our hands would hang down in utterly hopeless apathy and helplessness. But He reveals to us that Satan does live, and that he hates CHRIST, and that he hates and persecutes every soul that is trying to find CHRIST, or is savingly united with Him.

On earth the way to break a husband's heart is for the wife to doubt his love ; a father might sooner see his boy commit some open sin than that he should lock up his secret thoughts in cold reserve ; every human being longs for trust and confidence from those it loves. So the devil knows that the loving desire of the great Heart of JESUS CHRIST is the confidence of His people—He wills that every one for whom He died on the Cross and redeemed with that priceless Agony should trust Him implicitly, trust Him as the guide of his life, trust Him as against the whole universe, trust Him as against the whole body of the devil's army ranged against him. And so the devil, to hurt us and to grieve and annoy JESUS CHRIST, does all that in him lies to make us not trust Him.

And yet, once more, the very discipline which in His eternal wisdom CHRIST sees to be necessary for us, helps our fallen nature, and helps in a certain sense this malice of Satan. When the ancient patriarch in the old history was to receive the greatest blessing that had ever been vouchsafed to man on earth, when Abraham was to be called by GOD "blessed for ever," "the father of the faithful," his trust had first to be tested. For three long days he must journey on side by side with the boy he loved, seeing no hope of human deliverance. To the very end he must be tested. The wood must be laid in order, the hand must be stretched out to bind Isaac, before the vision of joy is vouchsafed and the deliverer is revealed, and Jehovah-jireh has provided the ransom and vouchsafed the deliverance. Even so at every stage of our life, whether we are beginning, or have attained to a fuller Christianity, at every crisis of life, if GOD has a great blessing for us, He first tests us. All comfort is taken away, we walk in darkness and see no light ; our sins take such hold on us that we cannot look up ; we

feel more helpless, weak, guilty, and fallen than ever we did previously. CHRIST says, Wilt thou trust Me, in the dark, alone, without human sympathy, without any consciousness of power in thyself, without anything on which to stay thy heart, wilt thou trust Me and love Me, the Living GOD Who died for thee ?

It is very hard : and those who have gone through it best know how hard it is. Look at that sea shore for a moment. Standing on the top of that grassy sward you see the rugged cliffs around, and you look down and see the great hard rocks beneath, and watch the waves dashing their whitening foam on the shore. Do you see that man there down by the sea shore with his arms stretched out, gazing upwards ? What is it ? Look a little further. Do you see that child a little below the grassy sward on which you are standing ? Do you see him hanging there by that branch of the tree ? The child thinks that the branch will hold him. You from above see the soil all loosening, and you know it is a question perhaps not of an hour before the child must be dashed to pieces on those rocks. And the man below knows it, and he looks round and he sees the waves dashing and the tide rising, and he cries in an agony, "Leave that branch ; fall into my arms ; trust me ; I can't wait longer ; I cannot see you perish." Oh ! it is hard for the little child to lose what seems safety, and to trust, to let go that last hold of life, simply in confidence, because the voice has spoken, "Let thyself go ; trust in me."

Thus, my brethren, there is this threefold difficulty ; from Satan, from our own hearts, and from the very dealing of GOD with man. You will see in a moment that CHRIST is powerless, unless we will trust Him, and have confidence in Him. Take another earthly illustration. If you have not confidence in your earthly physician, he can do nothing, nothing. The difference

between a wise man and a fool is simply this—a fool goes to one doctor, and after trying his prescriptions for a while, goes to another, and then to a third, and wonders he does not recover. The wise man pauses, considers, and at last chooses the physician in whom he has confidence. Then, though the cure may be delayed for weeks or months, he says, “I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform.” He goes on waiting, not happily at all, very unhappily perhaps, but patiently, because he has confidence. And if he refuse that trust, the wisest doctor that ever lived—I repeat the word—is utterly powerless. So it is with CHRIST.

If you read your Bible in the light of these thoughts, you will see what power our LORD attaches to confidence, to trust, to faith, how no wickedness is too great for Him to forgive, how by a word he healed the leper in the Gospel, and by another word in an instant He cured the palsied man. Consider, the only thing that hindered Him from doing mighty works was want of confidence in Him ; He could not do many mighty works because of their want of confidence.

Then do you ask, “How can I gain this confidence ?” How ? How do you strengthen your confidence in an earthly friend ? If some one tells you he has wronged you, or he has dealt cruelly with you, what do you do ? You think of his character ; you take out the old letters and read them over and over again, and you say, “I am sure that he is true, though appearances are against him.” If you have the opportunity you talk to him, and let him speak to you ; you spend time in his society till you know him, in order that you may be able to trust him with all confidence and knowledge. Even so, my brethren, if you wish to gain confidence in CHRIST, be alone with our LORD ; read His letters in

this Holy Book ; read about His life. Think how He dealt with every one that came to Him on earth ; talk to Him in simple words, like the simple words that people spake who came to Him when He went up and down those hills of Galilee. Take some promise of His, and thank Him for the promise. Tell Him you cannot realize it, or feel it, or believe it ; but, all the same, thank Him that He has said it. Then turn the promise into a prayer, and as you thank Him, and as you read His blessed Word, and as you let Him speak to you by the quiet voice of the indwelling Spirit, turn your prayer now into a prayer to GOD the HOLY GHOST. The Blessed Spirit lives to reveal JESUS CHRIST to us. Pray, then, to Him, " O GOD the HOLY GHOST, witness for my LORD ; whatever the standpoint at which I have arrived, reveal Him more to me. O Blessed Spirit, open my eyes to see CHRIST as my Saviour, to see Him as my Example, to see Him as the Mighty One Whose omnipotent love can dash all obstacles away, and cast my guilt into the depths of the sea. Show Him to me as having power to say to my leprous soul, ' I will, be thou clean.' Show Him to me, Blessed Spirit, as having the power to fulfil in me His own command, ' Be not overcome of evil '—CHRIST was never overcome of evil, He overcame evil with good. O Blessed Spirit, show to me"—let that be your prayer—" that my LORD lives, with all His power and love, to overcome the evil that is in me by His own omnipotent goodness."



PART II

A NEW BIRTH UNTO
RIGHTEOUSNESS

“O merciful God, grant that all carnal affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them.”



CARNAL AFFECTIONS

“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

THERE is a GOD, a living GOD. He is about our path and about our bed. In the dark hours of the night, in the weary tossings to and fro of the fever-stricken patient, there is an invisible Being always nigh. He is “not far from every one of us.”

And “God,” as the word expresses, is “good.” Therefore it is His nature to give; to give all that we need day by day, the daily bread, and the forgiveness of sins, and the deliverance from evil. God loves to give: to give over and over again. Judgement is “His strange work.” It was with tears pouring down His cheek that our Incarnate LORD said to Jerusalem, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Dear brethren, has that thought no power to touch your heart? For forty years, perhaps, we have never given anything to Him Who all the time has been loving us! We listen to the story of His love unmoved, many of us; most of us, at some period of our life. God have mercy on us!

Our next point is this: God has appointed certain

means, certain instrumentalities, by which He conveys His blessings to us. He does not give them merely in some directly spiritual and supernatural way, such as could only be discovered by the learned and enlightened, who have leisure to ponder on the deep mysteries of His working. He has appointed certain outward channels, through which the inward grace and life are communicated. Such, for example, are the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion ; the Holy Scriptures ; and the ordinary events of His providence in daily life. Such also are holy men and women. Such, in a special degree, are those whom He sets apart to be His ministers. All these are described in Holy Scripture as appointed by a GOD Who loves to give, for a definite object, namely, as channels of life, of grace, of blessing. When our LORD led captivity captive and ascended into heaven He received as Man from His FATHER certain gifts ; and these gifts He distributed among men as in olden days a conqueror scattered largesses amongst the crowds that had thronged his triumphal chariot. He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to spread life and grace everywhere around them.

The next thought that we have been considering is this : all these instruments, appointed by GOD as His own means of communicating His gifts to us, are, to a large extent, allowed by GOD to remain in their natural condition, that is, with much in them that is unattractive, or even repulsive. The outside is left as it was. The wrinkles in the face are not smoothed down by the painter's art. The old mistakes, the old weak points, in the good men and women remain—the want of breadth and judgement, the want of tenderness, perhaps, in GOD's ministers ; the one-sided exaggerations, the provincial accent ; the bad reading. All the outward defects remain.

In Bible history we find the same thing. Those

whom we now know as saints, those who are now looked upon as apostles, martyrs, and confessors, were all left in this condition. "What will these babblers say?—unlearned and ignorant men! They have never been trained in our schools of learning. The common people listen to them; but, as for ourselves—the 'Pharisees,' the learned, and the intellectual—we consider such preaching simply 'twaddle.'" Such were the ideas of the ordinary superficial observer, such the kind of epithets used, with regard to those of whom we read in the New Testament, whom we now look upon with such reverence.

And God has been pleased to allow this to continue. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." "Through the foolishness of preaching," God is pleased to save them that believe.

Woe be to the country that is doing what England is doing now! Woe be to the land that gives her best to the Army, to the Navy, to the Civil Service, and considers that anything is good enough to "send into the Church," as it is called (as if the poor boy had never been baptized!). Woe be to the land that gives her worst to the sanctuary; offering to God, as Malachi says, "the blind, the lame, and the sick"; reserving her best for that which brings abundant earthly honour and abundant earthly wealth!

And yet, God takes the refuse, takes what the Apostle calls "the offscouring of the world": the poor, the weak, the foolish, the contemptible: and He allows the world to laugh at them as it laughed at the Apostles; and, through the outside, He shows to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, something—something more than that! There is the "earthen vessel." Any child can see what common pottery it is. But within that earthen vessel, as S. Paul says, there is the heavenly treasure:

“the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD.” (2 *Cor.* iv. 6, 7.) There is One standing in the midst, Whom we see not—not the poor miserable clergyman, with all his defects ; not the poor man or woman, failing in the home, failing in business, failing perhaps in everything, crying bitter tears every night for having dishonoured GOD so much during the day—but One Whom we see not : JESUS CHRIST. The FATHER and the SON and the HOLY GHOST desired to use that external weakness as a channel through which life and blessing might flow into the home, into the parish, into the Church, into the world. And JESUS CHRIST is repeating the old piteous appeal : If thou knewest the gift of GOD, and Who it is that is speaking to you through all these miserable inconsistencies—if only you had looked beyond the instrument, beyond the clergyman, beyond the Bread and Wine at Holy Communion, beyond the water in the sacred font—you would have asked of Him, of Him Who was standing in the midst of you, and He would have given you the living water.

The thought that now forces itself upon us is this : the Bible history tells us that men and women like ourselves did make this great mistake, and were perfectly satisfied with themselves while they were making it. The Bible tells us that when the SON of GOD Himself was upon earth, those who corresponded in earthly position, in intellectual ability, in spiritual knowledge, to the ordinary congregation in this church, were so blind that they saw in JESUS CHRIST no beauty that they should desire Him ; that they despised Him, rejected Him, treated Him as an impostor, and thought that they did GOD service by nailing Him to the Cross and putting Him to death.

If this be so, then I would ask you calmly and simply, Is there no danger lest we—clergy and laity—

may be at least as blind as those amongst whom CHRIST went all unnoticed, despised, and rejected? Is it not possible that there may be something in the Bible, something in the Sacraments, something in every godly man and woman among us, that we have never yet seen, because we are blind? Is it not possible that there may be in every sermon, in every chapter that is read in our hearing from that lectern, something beneath the surface, that we are allowing to pass by all unnoticed, so as to lose the gift of a good loving GOD? Is there no danger?

My brethren, you must see that there is danger. You must feel, as I feel, what awful words those are in which our LORD replies to those who came to Him, saying, "Are we blind also? . . . If ye were blind, ye should have no sin"—natural blindness would be only an infirmity—"but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (*S. John ix. 40, 41.*) Have you never gone on your knees and said, "My GOD, do deliver me from blindness of heart"?

Imagine what it will be when we see CHRIST in His glory, and all the angels and archangels with Him, and all the saints; and we review our life, and find that everywhere, in the house, in the street, in the church, was a GOD surrounding us with blessings, channels of mercy, channels of life—perhaps Holy Communion every day, if we wanted it, and daily prayers—CHRIST ready to meet us over and over again; channels of blessing even in the "trivial round" of daily life: what will it be when we realize that JESUS was standing in our midst, loving us, and we never saw Him?

What, then, is the cause of this blindness? Crowds of angels round us, the glory of the cherubin and seraphin, all the blessed ones, all the little children that passed away fresh from their Baptism into the other

world near to us ; and yet some of us see—nothing ! Why is it ?

The Bible tells us plainly. It is because the devil, the god of this world, has blinded the eyes of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST, Who is the Image of GOD the FATHER, should shine upon them. A being blinds their eyes, and that being uses the things of this world to hide the glories of the invisible world by which we are surrounded. This is the simple explanation which is given to us in His tender love by GOD Himself.

Now, there are three classes of sins by which any one who has studied human nature will tell you that the god of this world blinds our eyes. It does not follow, remember, that, because we have yielded to the sins of which I am to speak, we are “lost.” Thank GOD, there has been made a complete Atonement ! “Now is the day of salvation.” There is free pardon, thank GOD, and grace to begin afresh ! Though we may now be on the road to ruin, we need not continue on that broad road a single hour.

But there are three different ways, drawn out for us in Holy Scripture, by which this veil is drawn over our eyes.

There is, first of all, the direct attack of the devil, in pride. When we are proud of ourselves, satisfied with our spiritual, intellectual, or earthly position ; when we are satisfied that our party alone is right ; that our section of the Church has the monopoly of truth ; when we say, “ I, at any rate, am not as other men are ” ; then we are falling into that sin which lost the devil his heaven. The first way in which the devil blinds our eyes is—I repeat—by any form of vanity or pride.

There is, secondly, the burning fever of impurity. “ Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see GOD.”

But this sin of impurity blinds the eye ; it takes away the nerve power ; it leads to softness, effeminacy, and to a yielding to the conventional standard. Impurity in thought, impurity in excess of food, impurity in any of those ways that cannot be particularized in the great congregation—impurity withers the soul as the burning fever withers the physical being.

Then there is the slow withering consumption of the love of this present world, “minding earthly things.” Look on the ground and you see mud. Look up and you see the stars, and the beautiful clouds and the heavenly sunset. You do not see both at once. The more we concentrate our thoughts on the world—our own world, whatever it be, the two or three people or the thousand, it is no matter which ; the more we accustom ourselves to judge, as Jesus did not judge, according to the appearance ; the more we carelessly let ourselves think as others think, look as others look, see as others of the world see—the more do we join ourselves to those who, in the days of CHRIST, crucified Him. The whole world then was satisfied that it had done right, because the god of this world had so blinded the eyes of those who believed not, that they could see no beauty, no glory in the SON of GOD.

Dear brethren, what is it that is blinding your eyes ? —love of this present world ? political worldliness ? religious worldliness ? impurity ? pride ?—*what* is it ? Ask yourselves. Many despised CHRIST, and saw no beauty in Him. Am I like them ? Many were blinded. Am I blinded ? Is the veil over my eyes ?—through pride, through impurity, religious or secular worldliness ?

Come with me, far away, in thought, to that great American continent. Let us stand in mid-winter near one of those gigantic lakes, all covered with its icy shroud. Watch far up in that clear sky the proud

sovereign of the air, that great eagle, peering up in its grandeur into the very face of the sun itself, the unapproachable glory. See the bird there, claiming kindred with the clouds, companionship, as it were, with GOD's eternal firmament. Watch its magnificence, as it poises its wings in that glorious atmosphere of purity and light and beauty. Watch it as the sunlight falls upon its plumes, in all its majestic beauty.

Then below, on that frozen lake lies a dark shadow. Watch! It is but a little shadow on that cold, ice-bound lake. The great sovereign of the air fastens its eye on it. It minds that earthly thing. It ceases to look upwards. It ceases to revel in the bright sunshine. It ceases to look through the open door into the great firmament of heaven. Its eye has fastened on that little shadow: something that it can grasp, something that it can eat, something that will satisfy its animal nature. With one great swoop it descends; it fastens on its prey! O what hundreds, in my twenty years of ministry, have I seen—heroes, GOD-sent souls, boys trained in apostolic homes, girls reared amid the tears of saintly parents now in Paradise—fasten on some such dark shadow!

Watch that bird. It has got what it wanted. But the talons are frozen: bound down to that ice! And there it remains—bones, talons, flesh—perishing, dying by inches, a monument to angels and to men of the power of the lower nature to destroy the higher: of the power of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men, lest they should see the beauty and the magnificence and the abounding love of Thee, my GOD and my King, Who art coming to judge the quick and the dead!

II

ONE THING LACKING

“Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.”—S. MARK X. 21.

A STRIKING picture, my brethren, is drawn for us in this chapter. In the background is the scenery beyond the Jordan ; and we watch two figures on the road leading down to the Jordan stream and across to Jericho and up to Jerusalem.

There is, first, the LORD JESUS CHRIST ; that eternal Saviour, born into the world for us men and for our salvation. There is that LORD Who is in the midst of us this morning, according to His own most sure promise, “Wheresoever two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.” There is that Saviour Who, through His wondrous death upon the Cross, has made it right for GOD to send far and wide by the voice of His messengers to every human being, whatever his past may have been, an unconditional offer of a complete forgiveness. There is that LORD Who shed His Blood upon the Cross in order that—nothing asked from us but the simple rudimentary repentance of turning towards God, of giving up anything that we know is wicked at the time, and of believing in the Blood of JESUS CHRIST—we should have acceptance in the Beloved. Look at the Face of Him to Whom all is owing that makes life bearable and that sheds brightness on the prospect of the everlasting ages which

have yet to run their course ; JESUS CHRIST is there, the LORD Who is in our midst to-day.

Next, the portrait is drawn for us of a man, in good position in society, a " ruler " (probably " a ruler of the synagogue ") but young, and one who has lived hitherto in the eye of man an irreproachable life. He can look his fellow-men in the face, and he can say, " I have honoured my father and mother ; I have committed no murder ; I have never broken the seventh nor the eighth commandment ; I have not borne false witness ; nor coveted my neighbour's goods ; I have defrauded no one."

I need not point out to you many details, such as that the man had never really dug beneath the surface. He had never grasped the spiritual meaning of those old commandments, as brought out for us by the LORD JESUS CHRIST in the Sermon on the Mount. Although we read between the lines not a little self-complacency and vanity in this young man, taking him as a whole he would have been described, and rightly described, as " a good sort." He was a thorough, honest, upright, straightforward man ; one of a race that, I am afraid, in England was more common in olden days than at present—yet one which may GOD increase in our midst and multiply a thousandfold!—and one which is, perhaps, more often to be found in England than in any other nation, unless, indeed, I am blinded by national vanity.

The man was able to convince everybody, except sometimes himself, that all was right with him. He could prove that he had kept the commandments. He could challenge anybody, as he did the LORD JESUS CHRIST, " What lack I yet ?" He could satisfy everybody except himself. There were times, the knowledge of which he would never have divulged to a single

human being, when he was not perfectly certain that the heaven for which every Jew was striving would really be his eternal possession. And so, when he observed that CHRIST JESUS, the great Teacher, had gone out of the little house, and had started on the road, evidently intending a long journey, the feeling came into his mind, "Perhaps I have missed an opportunity; perhaps He could tell me something I could do to make myself, as well as every one else, certain that I am on the road to eternal life." And so, with the impulse of a nature longing for all that was good, he forgot his position, and the appearance that he would present to the crowd of poor people gathered round JESUS of Nazareth; he ran, and fell at His feet, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to make sure of heaven?

Our LORD asked him about the commandments. "All these," he said, half disappointed, "I have kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?" And "JESUS beholding him loved him"; and He said, You are right; more right when you are nervous at home than when by loud talking you have convinced yourself as well as the crowd that you are perfect. You are wanting in one point; one thing thou lackest.

Now, let us try if we can (very briefly) see the characteristics of those in our own day who would be represented by this ruler. There are many, probably, here—at least there are in most congregations—poor as well as rich, servants as well as masters. The outward circumstances of the life vary, of course, according to ancestral inheritance, according to the traditions persons have received from their fathers. For we are moulded in our outward habits by the habits of our fathers. That is a solemn thought for fathers and mothers. I know many a man who never would miss family prayer, almost as a matter of super-

stition, because his father, and his father before him, always had the servants in for family prayer. There is a wonderful power in example, and parents should remember this power. But, I say, the outward circumstances vary very much. We form our standard, and are influenced in it by so many very varying circumstances. So it is impossible for me to draw an accurate sketch, but it is something, you know, of this kind.

The type is a person who may be man or woman, rich or poor, old or young. Upon rising in the morning, he would say his prayers, read a verse or two of the Bible, have family prayer, go out, be quite upright and straightforward all the day, come home, say his prayers, go to bed sooner or later. If he is accustomed to it, he will go, perhaps, to weekday service, or only go on Sunday. He may go to Communion in the weekday, or he may only go on the Sunday, or he will go, perhaps, once a week, or once a month, or once a quarter, or only at Christmas and Easter, according to his custom. He may go on a long time with the old outward habits of a good bringing-up: habits cling to us in a wonderful manner! He is perfectly ready, if anybody is speaking to him about his religion, to turn round almost angrily and say, "What more do you want? What can I do more?" Yet, though such a person can satisfy everybody that he has kept the commandments, he is not at ease.

We can look up and thank GOD that there are these men who keep the commandments, for they are the salt of the country: good, honest, upright men. Thank GOD for it! What would the Church be without the money they give, the example they set, the barriers they present against the inroads of immorality on every side? Thank GOD that they are numbered by hundreds

of men and women in S. Peter's parish! May GOD multiply them a thousandfold! But, to continue. This kind of person can prove to perfection to everybody except himself that all is right. But, when alone, *he* is not satisfied; *she* is not quite sure—as they read over the obituary in the *Times* and see one after another just reaching the very height of their ambition, and thence passing out into the Presence of an invisible GOD—they are not quite sure that the eternal gates will be lifted up, and that they will be for ever and ever with GOD and with the blessed angels. Then there is an impulse to come out, to fall down at JESUS' feet, to smite on the breast and say, "GOD be merciful! LORD, what lack I yet? Tell me."

And the answer to each one from that same JESUS of Nazareth, Who is in our midst to-day, is this: "One thing thou lackest." CHRIST, Who has created the sense of need; CHRIST, Who has awaked your conscience, has stamped with His approval those solitary moments when you are doubtful, whether the past has been a life of progress, and whether the future (if it be a future in eternity) will be a future of joy. That misgiving is from GOD, and GOD endorses it. One thing, O noble character, O glorious type of all that has made England what she is—one thing thou lackest; one thing, differing in every case—for it is not the letter of what our LORD said to that particular man with which we are concerned—one thing, differing in each case: father, mother, brother, sister, in the same family, differing in each case; one thing. O mother, pattern of mothers; child, perfectly obedient; son, whom thy father speaks of with such pride and love: one thing thou lackest!

A poor drunken man once reeled up to old Bishop Wilberforce in S. James's Square, and said, "Bishop,

how am I to be sure of getting to heaven?" The bishop looked at him, and said, "Don't you know that? My mother taught me that as I knelt at her knee in my childhood. My poor friend"—the poor wretched creature under the power of strong drink was reeling at his side—"my poor friend," said the bishop with that calm, quiet face that we remember so well, "turn to the right and go straight on."

My brother, take one step to-day. CHRIST has not altered. When He was upon earth people came to Him and said, What am I to do? He said, This is the first work of GOD, have confidence in Him Whom GOD has sent. Believe that CHRIST is near to you, and speak to Him. Take for granted that He means what He says; that He is with you this day and to-morrow and the day following. Go on till we meet again in GOD'S house, if we are spared to meet, to carry on the subject, and say, "O my LORD, Thou hast died for me. Show me, so far as I can bear the knowledge, what I lack. What lack I yet?"

And, secondly, have confidence enough to take for granted that, as JESUS beholding him loved him, so JESUS loves you when He beholds you on your knees, saying, "LORD, I am blind; open my eyes. LORD, I have not the courage to tell any one. They know I have kept the commandments. But what lack I yet? O LORD, if I am dying to-day and about to meet Thee, what lack I yet? LORD, show me. LORD, that I may receive my sight!"

"JESUS beholding him loved him." And He loves you, my brother, and He will answer thy prayer; though I may never know it on earth, He will teach you—and He will teach me—"One thing thou lackest."

GOD knows what the one thing is—"One thing!" What is it?

III

THE LOANS OF GOD

“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest : go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”—S. MARK X. 21.

YOU remember the picture as it has been drawn for us by the three Evangelists compared together. A young man, earnest, impulsive, in good position in society, with great possessions, utterly regardless of appearance, comes forward and in the middle of the open street or highway falls down at JESUS CHRIST'S feet : saying, Good Master, what shall I do that I may go to heaven ?

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST referred him to that which GOD had already taught him. You know the commandments, He said. He mentioned them. The man spoke back quite honestly. I believe that there was not an atom of hypocrisy in him at that time. I believe he was in the position in which (thank GOD !) numbers of you are to-day ; who have been living according to your light, who have been trying, so far as you knew how, with many imperfections, of course, to do GOD'S holy will, to carry out the old Catechism, to serve GOD truly as far as you had light, to honour your father and mother, and to live an honest life ; not stealing, or lying, or back-biting, or committing what is called open sin. All

these, he said, I have kept from my youth. What do I want now, what more ?

And then comes one, I think, of the most touching words in the Bible. "JESUS beholding him loved him." And He took the man at his word. He said, There is one thing you want. The LORD knew the idiosyncrasy, He knew, that is, the particular character of the man. He knew his thoughts, as He knows your thoughts and mine. And He knew what was keeping the man back. He knew the step which, once taken, would let in the whole light of heaven upon his past life, so that he would, like the publican, say, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner." He knew that one step which, taken that day, would let the whole light of the glory of GOD illumine his being ; so that the man would have gone further forward in a day than, without taking that step, years of Judaical observance would ever have led him.

One thing, He said, I ask, or you have asked Me, rather. One thing. I know you, true heart, I love you. Now, one thing ; go thy way now, sell whatsoever thou hast ; all of it, no seeking for what may be reserved, but all ! I, your GOD : I, Whom, at any rate, you look on as a Teacher ; I tell you, go ; whatsoever thou hast, distribute it to the poor. I will not leave you there. I love you. I want you to come with Me. Come, you shall have the very thing you have asked for. But I will not keep you waiting. You are young. You are impulsive. You have not yet the maturity of after life. You have not the patience—I do not ask it of you—to wait. Come now with Me. Take up the cross that I am carrying. Come bravely with Me ; and remember there is no man who has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and

lands, with persecution, as I shall be persecuted. But we shall go up together, as Abraham and Isaac went up to the mount of sacrifice, you and I. I love you, and GOD, My FATHER, has drawn you to Me. There is sympathy between us. We will be friends. Come, take it up now. Follow Me.

I should spoil the beauty, my brethren, of the narrative if I added a human word. Those who have ears to hear will perceive the glory and the beauty of those words of the Incarnate. Never man spoke as He spoke. No *man* could have spoken such words.

The countenance fell. The man was sad at that saying. He went away "very sorrowful," S. Mark says "grieved"; they mention sadness as if it had made a great impression upon them. He went away sad. He had been fascinated by that Face. Oh, would to GOD that we could see It, if only our seeing It would make us love Him more! He went away grieved, but he went. Why was it?

Now let us look for a moment at the subject. Let us remind ourselves, first of all, that the LORD JESUS is alive, and that He is with us now. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." May the Blessed Spirit help him who has to preach to grasp this for the few moments in which he is to speak!

The LORD is alive, and the LORD GOD is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. The only difference between CHRIST on earth and CHRIST now is this: that whereas then He spoke with the human voice, and the disciples knew Him after the flesh, now He speaks to our conscience by the still small voice of His Spirit; speaks more quietly, requires of us the use of our faculties, to make sure that we have not mistaken the voice either for some whisper of Satan or some cry of a heated

imagination. But He speaks as simply and as clearly now as ever He did when He was upon earth.

I see the like continually, my brethren. The voice speaks to people in a church like this ; and for weeks and months they have to consider, and then decide, whether to go away sorrowful, or to obey the voice.

1. We "go away" when we deliberately refuse to hear what *we* know to be the voice of God. Nobody else may think it is a voice. Nobody may ever know we had the call. If we ask anybody they would simply say, "Nonsense!" But we know that when we meet God, if there is a God, we shall have to say, "That was a real voice. I watched ; I waited ; I prayed ; and then, after weeks of thought, and the use of the common sense God has given me, it was clear that it was His voice." And having that conviction, we go away if we refuse to obey the voice. It may be the merest trifle, or it may be what the world calls a great matter. Very often the turning-point of a life is a trifle, in spiritual things as in earthly things.

2. And also, we go away when we deliberately refuse to face the question ; when we will not look it in the face and say, "Is that voice from God?" whatever it may be. It may not be the same as what was said to this man. The LORD knows each man's peculiar need, and the voices are different. But do we put it aside because (nobody knowing, observe, except God) we are afraid that if we follow it out it will lead us to something that we did not intend to do or wish to do? We may busy ourselves in anything—business, pleasure, or religious work, and philanthropic occupations—so as to get rid of that still, small voice ; and the heart gets hardened, as the Bible says, and the conscience ceases to speak. We think no more of it perhaps till our death-bed, or perhaps not even then ; generally, not then. Yet unless the whole teaching of the Bible is simply a human delusion, that

thought will meet us, that voice will again sound in our ears, like the echo, of which the sound, it is said, never dies. I do not know anything about that. But one thing is certain: the echo of the voice of the Eternal must be eternal. On and on, through all those long ages, the voice will ever be heard by that young man who went away very sorrowful, because—for the reason we shall see.

Now, my brethren, for a moment, having grasped this, look with me at the reasonableness of these words.

Let us take a very simple illustration. Suppose one of you lent me a sum of money, a thousand pounds, a hundred pounds, and you say to me, "I gladly lend it to you, but I may be obliged to ask it back from you without any notice. I may have time to give you a little notice, or I may have to ask it back in a moment. I may want it for my own purposes, or I may desire to lend it to some one else." Suppose that I thankfully take what you had lent me, and that when you asked it back of me, I refused to give it; I would not part with it. Your judgement upon me, of course, would be so simple that a child could follow it. You would say, first, that I was ungrateful, for not being thankful for having had the loan for so long; secondly, that clearly I was acting dishonourably to you, for that was the condition on which it was given to me; thirdly, I was not doing my duty to my neighbour, for every hour in which I kept those persons without the money that you intended to lend to them, by barricading my house and not allowing you to come and get it, I was defrauding those people of that which you had a right to lend them. And that was exactly the position of that man; and it is the position of every one of us who holds back from God.

God does not ask us to be always looking at every-

thing and saying, "Perhaps God will take that away to-day." God does not want the wife to be always thinking, "Perhaps He will ask my husband before the night is gone; perhaps I shall wake up and find him dead by my side, as other wives have done." All that is utterly alien to the freedom and the glorious confidence of the new dispensation. God does not want us to be looking at our children and saying, "And they may die to-day"; and so rob ourselves of all the joy of their innocent companionship. God does not ask us to be always thinking, "I wonder what is coming." All that is breaking the law of the kingdom which tells us not to look forward; day by day, sufficient for the day. Nor does God expect us not to feel it when He asks back His loan from us. God does not expect us not to feel; our LORD JESUS CHRIST felt all the agony; the tears rolling down His cheek, weary, heavy laden. "My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." He expects us to feel.

But it is so commonplace that if I did not know in my own life how hard it is to act upon it, I should be ashamed of taking your time in saying it, God has lent life to us. "In a moment," He says, "I may have to ask it back." He gives us health; in a day He may ask it back, for reasons known to Himself. He gives us money; He gives us husbands, wives, children, everything, in His own abundant goodness. "He openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness." But, for our education, for His own glory, for numberless reasons that there is no time even to touch upon, every single thing is given on one condition. It is lent by God with the understanding, the honourable understanding between the creature and the Creator, that it may be asked back at any time; with or without notice, suddenly or with preparation, as He sees best.

Well, then, my dear brethren, is it not perfectly obvious, whether it is the young man in the story, or you or I? We can set our face against Him, and either run away that we may not hear what God says, and say then we do not understand, as the Jews did when they crucified CHRIST; or, having heard, we may deliberately put it aside. Is it not obvious that then we are simply acting as the debtor should have acted, if instead of thanking the creditor for generosity in trusting him with all that money for such a long period, he had refused to give it back, and robbed the persons for whom it was intended?

My brethren, I know how difficult it is; as I look back over my own ministerial life; as I think of those who have come to talk with me, when the voice has spoken; as I think of those servants, feeling that they could not go to Communion and could not get to church in that situation, and therefore must go out from a home of perfect comfort, not knowing whither they were going; when I think of that poor woman who came to me in Windmill Street, with her little shop that brought in nothing all the week, and on Sunday brought in enough to keep her in comfort, and, without a word from myself on the subject, said, "I feel I ought to go to church and shut up my shop"; when I remember that man in the prime of life, one of the most popular men that ever came to this church, whom everybody liked, his business was prospering, bringing in three or four thousand a year, and increasing every year, and the voice came to him, and he said, "I feel there is nothing else to be done but to part with all this at once; leave me three or four hundred a year, and I must go out and work for God where others will not go; I am free, I must do it, and sell all that I have." Oh, my brethren, when they came to me, I remember how my heart shrank and sank

within me ! I thought what it would be, what it would cost, what a trial—the poor woman without bread, or almost worse, kept by charity—the poor thing ! Yet it was not I who told her, but GOD. She felt sure the voice was from GOD, and she said, “I must do it, or I shall go back, back, back, in my spiritual life.” And all that man’s friends saw the influence that he would lose in London ; how, instead of being looked up to as a man whose opinion would be taken in a moment by all the young fellows in London, they would say, “Lost his head ; that S. Peter’s ruined him !”

Oh, coward that I was ! Cowards that we all are ! As if my GOD would ever say to a man, “Give up,” without saying, “Thou shalt have treasure” ; as if it were not true that no man leaves house, or friends, or wife, or children for GOD’s sake, but he receives even here a hundredfold ; as if it were not true that, though the tears stream down at first, and it is a dark hour when the child is brought home dead to the mother’s arms, GOD can repay a thousandfold !

Come, take up this cross, my dear brothers and sisters. Which way, from north, or south, or east, or west, is the voice coming ? What is it thou hast to do ? What is it that thy LORD is asking of thee ? “JESUS beholding him loved him.” You are living according to your light to-day ; but are you ready, ready to face the truth, ready to hear the voice ? Are we living, you and I, with our life, strength, wife, children, everything, as if we did not possess them—though loving them, doing everything we can to make them happy ? Thanking GOD we are well and strong, thanking GOD for our intellect, thanking GOD for our reputation, and an honest name among men—but knowing that, if GOD will, to-morrow the character may be blasted by slander, that to-morrow the money may be gone, that

before to-morrow the soul may be asked, the life taken away? Are we living so that, though heart and flesh may fail, though we may cry with a broken spirit, yet we shall say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the LORD"? "Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven."

IV

THEY THAT HAVE RICHES

“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”—S. MARK X. 21-23.

THE more life-like does every detail of the faces of those two men appear—JESUS of Nazareth and the young ruler—the more solemn does the dark background of the picture come out, as we try to enter further into the meaning of the words which the Blessed Spirit has recorded for our instruction. We are no longer surprised that, looking at the human side of the story, the disciples were so fascinated by it, that every detail, every look of JESUS CHRIST and of this young ruler, was photographed, as it were, upon their minds. We wonder no longer that GOD has inspired three out of the four Evangelists to record the history, for we are brought here face to face with almost every problem which has perplexed the wisest and the deepest thinkers ages before the revelation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. That mysterious problem (which is just as mysterious when the idea of the personal GOD has been eliminated), why evil, how evil, can exist in the presence of goodness; why

evil is permitted at all ; that not less mysterious fact, which no logic can prove, but of which every human being is satisfied, the mystery of man's freedom—all come out here with a distinctness from which it is impossible for us to escape.

Here is one whom JESUS CHRIST loved ; loved in some clear, definite, personal, individualizing manner ; so that the words are emphatically recorded, JESUS, as His eye rested upon him, loved him. Here is one who is fascinated by the perfect love, the unspeakable majesty, of the Incarnate GOD. Here is one drawn (as we should say) within the circle of His influence, who desires to remain with Him ; who, when the command is given which he cannot or will not obey, is still miserable. The words are so striking when we compare the three Gospels. "His countenance fell," we are told. He became very unhappy. It was written on his face, "Oh, would to GOD I might stay with you, Master, Teacher, Who lovest me. I long for your presence." He was very unhappy. He was sorry to go. He longed to remain in that bright circle of JESUS CHRIST'S disciples. He longed for the courage to leave behind, as James and John and Peter had done, the home and the nets, and the father, the lands, everything. He longed to stay. He was sorry to go. And yet he went away. He was grieved, but he went.

Now, first of all, let us be on our guard. Whatever else we lose to-day, let us not lose the teaching of the chapter by listening to any of the subtle whispers of Satan. Let us not escape from it, as if CHRIST Who lived then is not the same CHRIST Who is alive to-day, and present wherever two or three are gathered in His Name. Let us not escape from it by imagining that we have not got great possessions, and therefore that the teaching does not wholly apply to us. The more

thoughtful among you, as you reflect afterwards on the passage, will see that while, for the sake of distinctness and brevity, I have to confine myself to the actual words of the narrative, to the "possessions" or money; although all that is said would apply equally well if, instead of riches, we put bodily vigour, mental force, a great reputation, or an untarnished name. Whatever we possess, whatever GOD has given us, whatever blessing we enjoy, is held just on the same terms as our money. Everything that JESUS said to this man here about his riches would equally apply to us, with reference to any possession; husband, wife, children, home, anything. Whatever we possess, whatever we have, the condition of having is losing; the condition of living is dying. If in this new kingdom to which you and I belong—GOD has said it, and the words are eternal—if a man chooses to keep he loses, if a man will save his life it is lost. The illustration JESUS CHRIST has given is so simple. He said that every single thing we possess we must deal with just on one condition. You take a corn of wheat and put it into the ground: and the condition of that corn of wheat being any real use to you is, that you will part with it, put it out of sight, bury it, trust GOD with it while it becomes black and discoloured and to all outward seeming is gone. So with character, reputation, home, wife, children, everything. Unless we are regarding them day by day in the spirit of the Communion Office, "Here we offer . . . ourselves, our souls, and bodies," they are practically no use to us so far as eternity goes. We are keeping with our will outside of the first elementary principle of the new dispensation. That is perfectly clear.

Then, secondly, let us bear in mind that everything in this world is relative. If there be in the church to-day any of those poor old women for whom your alms

provide a fixed income, so that (having been respectable all their life) by the organization of our Parochial Council of Charity we give them so much every week, that they may have no anxiety for the future: those persons are relatively rich. There is not a servant who comes to this church who, compared to hundreds with whom I have had to deal myself as pastor of poor parishes, is not rich. They have bread to eat, clothes to wear, a home in which to live. They have no anxiety about to-morrow morning. There will be bread for them, and a home.

Therefore, my brethren, keep those two cautions clearly before you. The LORD Who spoke is alive now. To every human being, preacher and people, old and young, masters and servants, rich and poor He speaks (for He is unchangeable), as He spoke on that way up to Jerusalem to this young man kneeling at His feet.

“One thing; sell all.” He went away grieved, for he had great possessions. The greater our possessions, the greater our difficulty in parting with them and obeying the law of the kingdom. But CHRIST, Who is the same, speaks to each one this morning. To every human soul there is the same great difficulty. We long to stay. Yet, O God, Thou knowest how hard it is to say, “I offer myself; I sell this morning all that I have. Nothing in my hand I bring. Just as I am, I come to Thee.”

Having thus cleared the way, a very few words will be sufficient.

I observe then, first, that this is a hard saying.

And I observe, secondly, that it is so simple as to be almost a commonplace.

In the light of the rest of the Bible, it is a hard saying. It would not be true to speak as if great riches were not a blessing given by GOD. The Bible tells us they are; not merely for the comfort that they bring

to us, but for the glorious opportunities that they bestow upon us of doing good to others. It is not necessary to enter into detail. Our common instincts, the instincts God Almighty has given us, tell us that it is a blessing to be well off, to have sufficient means to enable us and our children to have every advantage in this life. I am only just reminding you, without dwelling on details, that riches are a blessing from Almighty God.

And it seems so difficult to be told here by God Himself that those very possessions, that very comfort, that very store of health and vigour and intellect, and all that we covet, and naturally covet, are, as a matter of fact, made every day by Satan hindrances in entering the kingdom. We look back upon this man, and we see as a matter of history that he did not enter into the kingdom. He had the opportunity of following Jesus. He had the opportunity of becoming a disciple, of being baptized, of being put into a state of salvation, of joining the army who, in the Acts of the Apostles, went forth and shook the earth to its very foundation; and, as a matter of history, the man did not enter into that kingdom. We have nothing to do with his state in the other world. God takes him and does what is right with him, as He does with the heathen. We have nothing to do with anything more than what God has told us in these few verses; that the man lost that opportunity which we now covet every time we say the *Te Deum*: he would not be rewarded with the saints; did not join the noble army of martyrs; nor was one of the glorious company of the Apostles. He went back from CHRIST, and lost the position which, as a matter of history, S. Peter and S. James and S. John gained. He rejected the offer that was made to him. God offered him Christianity in place of Judaism. Then was offered to him salvation, then was offered to him companionship

with JESUS CHRIST; and he put it all aside. It seems so difficult for us to realize that the very man of all others who seemed to have been most blessed by GOD should be the one whose history is here recorded for our warning. It seems so hard. We are not surprised to read (as we do in the subsequent verses) that the disciples were astonished. It is repeated that "they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved." If a man with money, a man who can get a good seat and pay for it in a church, a man who can do what he likes, who can build a private chapel, and have a chaplain all to himself, a man who has the power of getting every single thing in heaven and earth that money will buy—if that man cannot get salvation, who in the name of heaven can be saved?

Is the astonishment not natural? Is there not a stamp of truth upon the whole story? "Who then can be saved?"

And our LORD looked round, and said to His disciples—and then comes that wonderful word, "Verily," which has such a deep meaning—He looked round and said, It is hard, but that which is impossible with men is possible with GOD. And He looked at the man very much as He might have looked at a poor paralytic if the question had been asked, "Can that man walk?" And JESUS said, That which is impossible with men is possible with GOD. That was the only answer He gave. It is the greatest difficulty on earth. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of GOD!"

And yet, secondly, I observe, my brethren, that the answer is so simple that it is a mere commonplace, if I may use the word with reverence. Just consider with me for a moment the facts of life. Is it or is it not true, that when we are perfectly comfortable in this

life, with a wife loving us, children who delight us, no need to desire anything on earth that we cannot obtain, good health, able to enjoy our amusements, getting on well in business, with an unblemished name, a fair reputation, good ability, rejoicing in all the beautiful brightness and sunshine of life—is it not a mere commonplace that this state tends to make us satisfied with the life that we now possess? Does not the Bible tell us, that just as when JESUS came on earth those Israelites followed Him who were not satisfied with this life, who were hungering and thirsting for something more, so, on the other hand, those who had got everything to make them contented here, who had received, as He expresses it, their consolation, who were comfortable, who were happy, and did not want anything else, went away instead of coming after JESUS of Nazareth?

Is it not, my dear brethren, a matter of simple common sense, that the Bible tells us that now the same LORD GOD is gathering out of this great world a little company who long for something more than earth, whom nothing here can satisfy, who feel that they are only strangers and pilgrims here, who are always longing for something higher and better in the glorious kingdom above—is it not a simple matter of common sense that those who are bankrupt of fortune, bankrupt of reputation, bankrupt of health, those who are miserable, poor, not having a place where to lay their head (as the result of a mere natural law), are more likely to be longing for JESUS to help them? They have failed in their own strength, and are longing for a wise GOD to guide them; they have made such miserable mistakes in their own past life, they desire some place, instead of the cold shivering nakedness of the wayside hedge, instead of the degradation of the common lodging-house, where they shall sit down with

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Is not the mere force of circumstances in which they live—provided the two are perfectly equal—certain to make the man who is miserable more ready to look for something beyond this life than the one who is happy, and who, therefore, by the mere force of circumstances, will gravitate to earth? Is it not so? Must it not be so, that the more we possess, the less we want to part with it; the more we have got to make us contented here, the less likely we are to be crying, “O God, come back in Thy glory; O FATHER, make me ready for the kingdom of heaven”?

“Eyes that the preacher’s art in vain hath schooled,
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips cry, ‘God be merciful,’
That ne’er said, ‘God be praised.’”

When we have lost our all, whatever it be, we are driven to God. How difficult for those who have great possessions to enter into the kingdom of God!

My dear brethren, I wish not to say one word more than the Master, Whose words at least I try to teach, has spoken.

The mystery of the passage before us oppresses the soul. The love of the LORD JESUS CHRIST seems shining out this morning as I speak—beholding you, loving you, knowing that you are put in a position which He recognizes as full of difficulty; I see some of you with such perfect characters, such unblemished reputations—thank God for it!—all of you with many comforts, comparatively few unable to write down your names in that census without any great heart agony. You are contented, long may you be so; in one sense happy, long may you continue so! In one sense! and yet He Who loves you, He Who died for you, He on Whose Passion we are

about to gaze, says to you, my own dear people, beloved in God, that you are in the greatest danger. I am ; I have confessed it. You are. All of us are. How difficult for those who have possessions to become as little children, to sell all, to make sacrifices, instead of waiting till God has taken them from us !

How hardly ! And yet, surely, surely, that which is impossible with man is possible with God. If only this young man had had the strength to remain a little longer with JESUS CHRIST, if only he had had the courage to stay a little—this event happened about a Tuesday or Wednesday—probably if he had only stayed till a Friday, he would have seen JESUS open the blind man's eyes as He went up to Jerusalem ; if he had stayed a little longer he would have heard at Bethany, when they spoke with Martha and Mary and Lazarus, of the wonderful resurrection that had been wrought by the Incarnate LORD ; if he had only waited over the next Sunday, then he would have gone on to watch all the Agony and bloody Sweat, the Cross and Passion, and to see the glorious Easter ; and in the forty days he would have cast in his lot with JESUS.

And now for us there is light, and now there is joy, and now there are the prayers of Christendom rising, if only we will be strong. Make up your minds on your knees, my dear brethren, this day. You have wandered often, I doubt not, on some quiet night, by the shores of a sleeping sea. You know those nights with which we are so familiar in this our England ; a night half dark, half light, with bright moonbeams and passing clouds. Look on the surface of that quiet sea. Do you see it ? Do you see that path of light : the moon's bright beams reflected on its glassy surface, calm, still ? Look at it quietly. The one side, the dark shadow and the lowering cloud ; the other, darkness : dark, light,

dark. Out from that darkness comes that little vessel. For a moment you watch it, all irradiated in the light ; every sail, every rope, every tiny bit of that vessel, all bright in the moonlight. You watch it. It is a picture, my brother, of thyself. Thou hast come out of darkness into light. Thou art now in the presence of Him Who is the Light : CHRIST, the Light of the world. Watch that vessel. Will it remain ? Will it drop anchor and abide for ever in the light, till the moonbeams pass away and the glorious sun shineth everywhere ? Or will it pass out of the light ?

Which shall it be ? This young ruler was in the light, and he passed out into the deep, deep darkness. Will you, shall I, in the light to-day, be known for eternity as the man, the woman, the child, that once was in light ; and JESUS beholding us loved us, and JESUS said, "One thing, one thing thou lackest" ?

O GOD, will it be said of any of us on that day, He was in the light, and he went out into the darkness ; very sorry to go, very grieved ; but he went away ?

GOD grant it may not be so, for him who preaches, for you who hear, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake !

V

THE DISPENSATION OF THE
SPIRIT

“With Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”—S. JAMES i. 17.

TO the subject of the Person and work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, our thoughts are led by all the Gospels of the later Sundays after Easter ; and to consider it is the natural preparation for the great Whitsuntide festival. Yet a little while, and the first manifestation of the HOLY SPIRIT will be commemorated amongst us ; yet a little while, and we shall hear, as it were, the echo of that rushing, mighty wind, and see again in our midst the tongues of fire, and hear the promise of the Eternal GOD as to the new grace and strength that is for ever, until the return of JESUS CHRIST, pledged to His Church. By way of preparation, let us endeavour, depending upon the help of that Blessed Spirit, to realize to some extent what a tremendous difference was made in the position of the world by that revelation of the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, GOD the HOLY GHOST.

Few, comparatively, study their Bibles with sufficient intelligence to observe the different revelations which GOD has vouchsafed to mankind. It is a word with which we are familiar, taken from one of the Epistles, that this is the “last dispensation.” Let us dwell for a moment

upon the meaning of that word *dispensation*, or dispensing. The word, in the Greek, brings before us the idea of the ruler of the household, the man to whom is entrusted the ordering and arranging—whether the arrangement be made directly or indirectly ; by his own direct intervention or through the instrumentality of others—the agent to whom is entrusted the ordering and guiding and ruling of the household. Or, to take a parallel word in the old Anglo-Saxon, bringing out with still more beauty the position of our Divine Dispenser, he is the “loaf-giver”—the giver-out of the portion of bread, the necessary food that is required for each member of the household ; or, to use the Bible language, the one who gives to each “his portion of meat in due season.”

We know that with the Ever-blessed and Glorious Trinity, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” GOD is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art GOD.” “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made” : there, without the shadow of a change, was that Ever-blessed Trinity. When this world, with all its changing caprices, its ever-varying fashions, its miserable, impotent pride, attempting to scale the very mountains, and to stand on an equality of thought with the great Creator of the universe—when all this world shall have shrivelled into nothingness, and the new heavens and the new earth shall have been called into being by the word of the Omnipotent GOD, He, that Creator and Destroyer of the universe, will still remain the same, unchanged and unchanging.

But just as a wise parent, watching the growing capacity of his children, gives out to them, as they are able to receive it—line upon line, precept upon precept

—the knowledge which he himself has acquired, it may be, through a long lifetime ; so the Eternal FATHER—not indeed having had need to acquire knowledge, but possessing in Himself the fullness of wisdom and knowledge—has been pleased to look upon the world in its completeness as an individual, and to give out to this child of His creation its portion of meat in due season. He has been pleased to reveal to humanity, as they seemed able to receive it, one portion after another of the eternal truth.

So we find—without entering now into subtle divisions of Old Testament history—at least three divisions of God's dealings with men.

There is the revelation of GOD the FATHER. There is the manifestation of the Incarnate One, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And there is the dispensation of the Spirit, of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

Looking back for a moment into the old story of Genesis and Exodus and the succeeding books, you see GOD revealing to the Church in the earlier ages of the patriarchal times, the intense personal love with which the great Heart of the Creator is filled towards His weak and tempted children. You find Him condescending to call a man "His friend." You see Him taking a tender personal interest in a wretched, deceiving, shuffling man like Jacob, watching him year after year, giving to him sufficient trial to burn out the dross, that the fine gold might be manifested in all its clearness ; and yet amid all the chastisements, amid all those dreary years of banishment from his father's house, amid all the upbraidings of his conscience, for ever bringing back to him the sins of earlier life, there is manifested the intense love of GOD the FATHER towards him. We see that love on the first night, when the poor boy (as he must have appeared to the angels, whatever might be his age computed by the

earthly standard, went out from home, friendless, guilty—remorse behind and the dark, blank future before him—even then not waiting till the man had proved the reality of his repentance, not waiting till by some great act of superhuman devotion he had called down the Almighty compassion; but taking him as he was, in his weakness, in his wretchedness and defilement, GOD vouchsafed unto him one of the most glorious visions with which the Old Testament pages are filled. He saw the ladder, and the Eternal GOD, and the angels ascending with his poor prayers, as he was struggling to plead out of a wandering mind and a weak and tempted spirit. There was the ladder, and the angels going up with the prayers of the wanderer, bringing down the answer of mercy from the High and Lofty One Who inhabiteth eternity. And so on, all through his life, blessing mingled with chastisement. The love of the Eternal FATHER was revealed at every turn of his changing life.

And then, when the love of GOD had been taught to mankind, taught to the Church that she might reveal it to humanity, then came another and a yet sterner discipline. Amid the thunders of Sinai, and the mountain that burned with fire, and the crowd kept back and forbidden to touch the base of that hill whereon the Presence of GOD was revealed, men were taught for the first time the utter unreality of the fashionable theology of modern days. They were taught by anticipation the utter nothingness of that “emasculated form of religion”—that degradation of the Godhead—which lowers it even beneath the level of a good and a holy man.

On that mountain the Church of GOD, and through the Church humanity, was taught that GOD is *holy*. “Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come.” The fullness of the revelation

that those words convey was not yet vouchsafed. But the keynote was given : Your GOD is not merely a GOD of love ; He is a holy GOD, and will in no wise clear the guilty. And so, through the long history of the teaching of the law, through that hard discipline by which the offender was stoned, and the adulterer not allowed to live, GOD taught men that the *law* must be respected, that GOD would bring every secret thought into judgement, that, sooner or later, that sentence which is the epitome of the law, must have its fulfilment :—"Be sure"—be sure, whatever your own deceitful heart may tell you, whatever the world may whisper—"be sure your sin," that sin which is hidden from all the world, "will find you out."

Then, after a while, through long preparation of seers and prophets, the way was made ready for the revelation of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He came on earth, very Man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, full of all the tenderest sympathy, knowing what it was to hunger and to thirst, knowing what it was to be so tired that when they took Him into the little boat on the Sea of Galilee, He fell asleep from pure human weariness : very Man, entering into all the sorrows of a suffering humanity, agonizing in Gethsemane, crying on Calvary with a loud voice, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" The LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the verity of His human nature, came on earth to be for ever manifested as the Example of a purer morality than the world had ever known, to be the Guide of men in the ascent of the everlasting hills, to make men know something at any rate of the character of the GOD with Whom they had to live for all eternity. And He came—thank GOD, that foundation truth has been preached over and over again

in this church—He came to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, to take the whole guilt of the world upon Himself, that His Blood shed on Calvary might cleanse us from all sin. And then, after that death on the Cross, He rose again, and ascended into heaven, there to be for ever at the right hand of the FATHER, making intercession for us. Such was the revelation—for I can only remind you of the old familiar truths—such was the revelation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Now comes a point which is often forgotten. Many, even of those who are to a certain extent students of their Bibles, have lost altogether the deep significance of those portions of Scripture which our Church has chosen for these later Sundays after Easter. If you look through our LORD'S last conversation with His disciples—nay, even if you take such a passage as that about the well of water springing up into everlasting life—you will see how continually the LORD JESUS CHRIST told His disciples that all the wonderful miracles which they had beheld, all the marvellous exhibitions of supernatural power, the healing of the sick, and the cleansing of the lepers, and the raising of the dead, were as nothing compared to the Divine manifestations which were reserved for the coming dispensation. The Divine Householder had given out the revelation of a holy and loving FATHER in the Old Testament, the revelation of the GOD-MAN in the Gospels had yet a greater wonder to reveal to the expectant Church, after those ten days of quiet preparation. Oh, would to GOD that the Church now could realize the secret of her power! not by might, nor by power, but by the preparation for the outpouring of the HOLY SPIRIT, the preparation by which Pentecost was heralded. Those ten days in which the few poor

people met together in the upper room at Jerusalem, those days of prayer prepared the way for the revelation of the third and last manifestation, the manifestation of GOD the HOLY GHOST. In that dispensation we live, separated off from the disciples who were the companions of JESUS CHRIST; separated off by a great gulf from S. John the Baptist, and all who were baptized into his community; separated still further from the patriarchs and prophets and kings of the older dispensation, any one of whom, we are told, would gladly have torn off his purple robe, and cast his royal crown to the ground, if he had been allowed to know one sentence of the Catechism that is taught to the children in our schools. "I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the LORD and Giver of life." Let us for a few moments try to grasp something of the position that we now occupy in these latter days. What are our privileges? Let us calmly count them one by one.

May GOD the Blessed Spirit give such power and wisdom to the words spoken, that to many a heart in this church these privileges, from this day, may be part of their conscious possession.

First of all, we are perfectly certain that if we are trusting in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, on account of that complete Sacrifice which He has offered—that life of perfect obedience, and that atoning death—the whole of our sin, so far as guilt is concerned, is buried. The promise has been fulfilled for us, the promise of the Old Testament prophets, "I will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This, says the Apostle, is the new covenant, this is the distinguishing characteristic of the latter dispensation—"their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—a complete absolution through JESUS CHRIST the LORD.

Then we have the certain knowledge that the SON of GOD, very GOD, is living to make intercession for us ; that, however our thoughts may wander, however poor and imperfect may be our supplications, if we cast them upon the LORD JESUS CHRIST, He assuredly presents them, making them perfect by His all-prevailing intercession. Just as some poor blundering simpleton will go to a learned lawyer, and will explain to him in stammering provincial accents, the difficulties in which he is involved, hardly able even to explain what he means with sufficient distinctness for the acute mind of his advocate, and then, having committed his cause to that trained intellect, returns home with calm confidence. He believes that all the subtleties of his neighbours who are perpetually annoying and irritating him shall be henceforth powerless with him, because his cause is committed to one in whom he has confidence. So are we confident : confident, I say, because the central truths of Christianity are absolutely certain. The fringe, the outside truths, I grant you, may be argued about for ever ; but the central truths, of which I am speaking to-day, are as certain as anything on earth can be certain ; more so, for they are based upon the Word of the Living GOD.

Again, when we are tortured by anxieties for ourselves, for those whom we love, for the great Church of GOD, Satan hinders us, it may be, with a thousand wandering thoughts, preventing us from praying any prayer that gives us the slightest comfort or the least portion of satisfaction ; yet we come and we tell it to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Just as, in the olden days, the High Priest within the veil was hidden from the sight of the congregation, and they lay all silent without, waiting till the work of intercession was completed, so is it with our great High Priest. Our

words—feeble, poorer than the words of the veriest clown when listened to in the presence-chamber of heaven—our poor stammering words are not despised by that Divine Elder Brother. He bears them on His Heart, the great Advocate Who ever lives to make intercession for us. And so we have that certainty, that whatever we need we can commit to Him with the unbounded confidence of men who are reposing upon the Everlasting God.

Further, we are partakers of a privilege which was only enjoyed in a very limited sense by the Jew, in the fact of being joined together with all our fellow-Christians in one communion and fellowship of God's Holy Catholic Church. There is something depressing in fighting a battle always alone. There is something that crushes the spirit in seeing the great world, with all its time-honoured customs and with all its prestige, arrayed against you ; to feel, "Who am I, that I can stand against that mighty army?" But we know—as the weakest child in this church has the right to know—that we are part of a Body, that we are linked, by God's eternal counsels, with all the saints and martyrs and confessors gathered out of every age and every land ; with that lion-hearted bishop who has gone forth to Africa, with those who are doing the LORD's work in India, with the spirits and souls of the righteous whom GOD has gathered into Paradise. When we remember that these are all one with us, there comes into the heart of a man—if only he has the grace given him to look above this lower earth—an overpowering sense of the grandeur of his position and the dignity of belonging to the Church of CHRIST.

The knowledge of that exalted position raises us above many a petty care, and above many a degrading temptation. The cares are felt, the iron eats into

the soul ; but the spirit, the higher part of the man, has communion with the great and the good of every age and every land. When the battle seems to be going against the Church in Britain, we read of the victories that she is winning in wellnigh every quarter of the globe, and we thank God and take courage.

And all this is the gift of this last dispensation. For the Jew, though he had a Church, was at best but a member of an isolated nation shut up in that little land of Palestine, almost separated off from every onward movement of the great world in which he lived. Whereas we, in these latter days, by the very largeness, the catholicity of the Church, have sympathy with every movement that is good and true and holy, and according to the mind of God, and worthy of the dignity of humanity. It matters not whether good come from the Conservative or the Liberal side of the House, the Church's arms are open to receive it, the Church's heart beats true, with quick sympathy for everything that is good, for everything that will elevate mankind.

And that is not all. Not merely are we linked one with another, not merely have we a God to pray for us, not merely have we the certainty that if we believe in Christ we are washed from our sins in His Blood ; but by God's own regenerating act, by the Word of God, according to His own Divine will, we have been baptized into the Trinity, into the FATHER, and the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, made members of Christ, and children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Have you ever thought what these words mean : baptized into, covered, as it were, with the ever-glorious Trinity, baptized into the FATHER, into the SON, and into the HOLY GHOST ?

O mystery of mysteries ! would that the grand

intellects that GOD has given to England in this age were more brought to bear on these great verities of the Faith! How much is involved of supernatural power, of untiring energy, of all-conquering might, in that one formula which is pronounced over the little child, baptized into the FATHER, into the SON, into the HOLY GHOST!

Again, that is not all. Not merely are we baptized into GOD, but we are fed with GOD's own Divine life. We are made partakers, we are told—and you cannot rob these words of their meaning—we are made partakers of the Divine nature. GOD is pleased to communicate to the weakest and most trembling believer who kneels at that Table—simply trusting in the word of the LORD JESUS CHRIST Who brake the bread, and poured out the wine, and said, “Take, eat : this is My Body ; drink this, for this is My Blood.” GOD has covenanted to give to that poor, weak child, kneeling there at his first Communion—What ?

Words fail, my brethren, words fail to define that stupendous Gift which is contained in those words, “The Body—the Blood—of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”

The gift of the new dispensation, the Pentecostal blessing, is the indwelling of GOD, the indwelling of GOD the HOLY GHOST. He lives in you, dwells in you. Your body, saith GOD, is the temple of the HOLY GHOST, Who dwelleth in you. Oh, it is that which makes a certain class of sin so awful! The body—the temple of the HOLY GHOST, Who dwelleth in us! You are not your own; you are bought with a price; therefore glorify GOD in your body, and come out from the unclean crowd and be separate. Let me be to you, saith GOD, what I will to be, a FATHER Almighty.

In the natural world of God's creation, when electricity was discovered, it was a wondrous gift and revelation, that men could communicate their thoughts to those far distant, in a moment, as it were, of time. Something like that wondrous transformation was the change that was effected when the great Dispenser of all grace, when the Eternal God was pleased to reveal the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, when God came to live in us, to take possession of us. Men had seen a possessed soul ; they had seen devils taking for a time possession of men, and dragging them down to perdition. They had seen the awful power of that invisible kingdom of darkness.

But what is it, that you and I are possessed by God ? It is that when you have to speak, it is not ye, saith CHRIST, who speak, but the Spirit that speaketh in you and through you. It is that when you have to say with stammering lips, "I do not think it is right," and you are laughed at, and you feel that you have blundered over it, and done more harm than good, God will take that word and, if He sees fit, all unknown to you, make it an arrow piercing through and through into the heart of the man who has laughed at you. Any clergyman can tell you of instance after instance where a silly, weak person, just saying, "It is right," or "It is wrong," or "I think I ought not so to do it ; I am afraid I cannot do it," has been made such a power, because he was possessed by God, that though the enemy had come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord God had raised up a banner against it, and it was powerless.

Now, the position of Britain at present—it is a commonplace to say it—is a most critical one ; and I think that many of the books that we read, and the sermons to which we listen have oft-times a tendency to be one-sided. Either the glorious results that have been

accomplished are exaggerated, or the dangers are so magnified, as almost by the perpetual dwelling upon them, to hasten their accomplishment and realization. It appears to me that at present there is, on the one hand, an amount of spiritual activity, a deepening of the spiritual life, a real honest desire on the part of a number of lay people, to do their best, according to their light, to fulfil the will of GOD in the land. Of course, if through the carelessness and sluggishness of the Church, men grow up not knowing what is meant by a Church, or by Holy Baptism, or the Holy Eucharist, it is not natural to expect that they should at once embrace all that GOD has revealed in His love to those who are every year being confirmed amongst us. But, according to the light that GOD has given them, no one looking impartially at the world around him can fail to acknowledge that there are numbers trying to do their best as good, honest Englishmen. And more than that, unknown to the world, unknown even to the congregations that muster in our churches, there are little bands meeting together day after day—there are hundreds of souls in the quiet of their own chamber—praying to GOD: “Remember not, O LORD, the iniquities of our forefathers; spare our country; raise up Thy power and come among us.” I speak that which I know, and I am bearing witness to that which I have seen.

And yet, on the other hand, it is simply ridiculous to ignore the signs of danger with which we are everywhere surrounded. Of course, numbers have not time to read history. Numbers are occupied in different ways, so that it is impossible for them to gather that teaching which GOD gives us in the experience of the past. But any man, who is familiar even with the alphabet of history, is aware that there are around us

now just the outward signs by which the downfall of some of the mightiest empires in the world has been heralded. The Roman poet will tell you that when the home life was losing its purity, that country was tottering to its fall. Every wise philosopher of the olden time would have taught you that all the luxury and increase of money by which we are encompassed are just (unless they are jealously watched) the harbingers of a nation's ruin.

Here are these two forces. The country—thank God, we have seen it on several marked occasions—the country is still loyal and true, true to God and true to its sovereign. And on the other hand, impurity, and dishonesty, and adulteration in trade, and a wretched servile imitation of the class immediately above, and a reckless extravagance, and a miserable habit of living upon money that belongs to the tradesmen whose debts have never been paid—all these most wretched signs of a degraded empire are around us.

Now, what is the practical lesson to be learned? It is this: the tremendous importance of each individual man and woman who has been baptized into the Body of CHRIST. If it be true that we live in this latter dispensation, if all the glorious privileges of which I have spoken are ours (and if we believe in the Bible we know that they are ours); if we are aided by the HOLY SPIRIT in us so that any petition that we offer is sure to be accomplished in God's own time and in God's own way, should it be really for our good and the welfare of His Church; if it be true that our bodies are the temples of the HOLY GHOST, and that we are thus possessed by the Living Spirit, then, I say, what a tremendous influence each Christian man and woman and child can exercise on the future of the country! I am not speaking of those whom God has set like a city on a hill, whose light

cannot be hidden ; I am only speaking of the poorest and the weakest who are brave enough not to give up themselves to evil, who will not yield to the spirit of extravagance, who will not be dragged by the world wherever it wills, and who will in God's strength dare to stand alone. I am speaking simply of those who will really try to be true to the leading of GOD the HOLY GHOST. Now see the tremendous power they have.

How little those last ten men in Sodom thought that the whole city depended on them!—that one man, perhaps, if he had been true (ten instead of nine), would have saved his country. There was one man there, perhaps, whoever it was, who might have saved his country if he had been true. How little that poor slave thought that she would be the means of the salvation of Naaman, and the carrying of the teaching of GOD into that Syrian land ! How little those fishermen thought, that by simply obeying the call, "Follow Me," they were to shake the world to its foundation ! How little S. Peter thought that by just saying his prayers in the middle of the day, when other people went to sleep in those hot countries, he would receive the vision which would enable him to open the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles, so that in the ever-widening circles its sound has gone forth throughout all the earth ! How little conception has any one of the mighty import that attaches to his truth, his trust, his GOD-fearing Christian living, his progress, his life of dependence on the HOLY SPIRIT ! No one knows these things, brethren, but GOD.

If you love this old fatherland, if you believe that it is a critical time, then let the practical effect be, that you reconsider your life. Now, at the beginning of this season, ask yourselves, "Am I really obliged to spend that money which so-and-so spends ? Am I really

obliged to read that book because others read it? Can I not, even if I am obliged to go to that place of amusement where everything that is immoral abounds, if I am obliged by my duty to those whom GOD has set over me to go, can I not at least bear witness for my CHRIST by saying, "I do not wish to go"? (That is a witness.) Can you not? Is there one who has not the power to do that?

Oh, men and brethren, for the sake of England, for the sake of the children that shall come after us, for the sake of the GOD Who became incarnate and died on Calvary, I beseech you, believe that you are indeed possessed with the HOLY GHOST, that there is a power in your prayers, that there is a power in the stammering words at which the world will sneer, that there is a power in your refusing to do what others do, and to live as others live around you! Believe that you may live the very highest life which God has revealed to you.

I am not preaching any narrow isolation. I am speaking with the fullest sympathy with all that is joyous, and pure, and beautiful in life; I am not grudging the man his sports, or the young girl her harmless amusements. Thank God that they have them! Long may they live to enjoy them! But I am bearing witness for the glorious might of every individual man and woman who is baptized into the Holy Trinity, who has been made a partaker of the Divine nature, who has God within him, to be not a cypher, but a power for good in the great progress of humanity.

Sons and daughters of Great Britain, arise! Look round your homes—I am not sent to judge, but to speak and to help you to know Him Who came to save you—look round on your homes, look round on the money that has been spent in the past, look round on the money you intend to spend in these coming months, look round

upon the great Church of God! Hear the voice of the Incarnate One, as He stood on that hill-side of Olivet, and pray Him to give you courage; that He may never have to say of Great Britain through your fault, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in that thy day!

VI

THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

“That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.”—I COR. xv. 46.

WE know, I trust, that GOD the HOLY GHOST is a Person, separate from the FATHER and the SON, conscious of separate Being, though of the same substance with the FATHER and the SON; a living Person, as truly as the FATHER lives and the SON lives. And we have traced the progressive revelation of the three Persons. The Blessed Trinity, of course, was ever the same, three in One, and one in Three, “most ancient of all mysteries.” But the revelation to man of this threefold personality has been gradual; first the FATHER, then the SON, then the HOLY GHOST. And our position in the last dispensation has been, I trust, clearly defined. Not merely have we entered into the possession of all that the people of GOD enjoyed under the old Covenant, not merely have we inherited all the high privileges of those who touched the hands and listened to the very voice of the Incarnate GOD; you and I have advanced a step higher on the way up to the everlasting hills, for no virtue of our own. It is not our doing, any more than it is any credit to have been born in an age when the electric telegraph and all the mighty machineries of science have been manifested in the natural world. GOD, Who loved our fathers just as much as He loves us, has been pleased to ordain that,

while they were born under the old Covenant or in the days of CHRIST's personal ministry, we of this latter dispensation shall have been made partakers of something far more glorious and Divine than the mind of man in the olden days had ever been able to conceive. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that GOD hath prepared for them that love Him," but observe, the text is often misquoted—but GOD has revealed them to us by the HOLY GHOST. We have been made partakers of the Divine nature ; we have been baptized into the Trinity, into it ; our life hidden with CHRIST in the God-head ; the black, hard stone of our fallen nature covered with the rising tide of the Divine influence of the FATHER and the SON and the HOLY GHOST, so that in GOD we live and move and have our being.

In us GOD the HOLY GHOST dwells as a living Person, the most tender, sympathizing Friend, able to make allowance for all our weakness, able to supply our manifold defects, able and most willing to correct our manifold faults.

Yes ! GOD the HOLY GHOST is living in you and in me, to suggest, to hasten, to restrain, to purify, to strengthen, to lift up into the society of the very angels our inner man, our immortal spirit, the highest part of our being. Dwelling in that centre, from the spirit of the man He influences the soul and the body in like manner ; dwelling in that inmost citadel, He sends forth illumination into the mind, purity and fervour into the affections ; and He will not stay His glorious work till the last promise has been fulfilled, and the very mortal bodies have been quickened by the power of the same HOLY SPIRIT that raised up CHRIST from the dead in that new body of His resurrection life.

And so it comes to pass as a simple commonplace in

the Christian covenant, that every command of our God can be fulfilled ; because it is God, Who gave the command, that is working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Everything that the Bible describes as the normal life of the regenerate soul is within our reach, partially on earth, to a greater extent probably in Paradise, perfectly in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth, as its natural habitation, the Divine righteousness.

Peace and joy, love to God and man, holy affection, Christian liberty, wisdom to know God, understanding to recognize and apply the principles of the eternal kingdom ; in the idlest child that has wasted its life up to this year, in the weakest member of this congregation, each and all of these can be developed in God's own time and in God's own way, because God hath so willed, because God hath so promised.

We have seen, further, that the only requisites on our part are :—

First, not to be satisfied with the dictum of any preacher, but that from God's own Word, with the help of our concordance, going down from time to time on to our knees for Divine enlightenment, and then rising again to study the pages and compare the texts, we search out for ourselves from God's own written Word whether that which has now been said is true.

Secondly, that without relying upon our progress, or upon our feelings, or upon any human ground whatever, we definitely resolve at once to accept the Word of the Living God thus discovered, and to believe that what God has promised He will most surely perform ; in other words, to put our confidence in the fullness of the promise that we have found in Holy Writ.

Thirdly, that we do not hinder the work of the HOLY GHOST by any wilful, deliberate resisting of His blessed

influence. "In many points we offend all," and that continually; but that is quite different from wilfully indulging, persisting, and continuing in that which we know to be wrong.

Fourthly, that we become fellow-workers with GOD, by prayer, by using such means of grace as are put within our reach, by accepting—and this is very important—by accepting any discipline by which GOD is humbling self, by which GOD is robbing the world of its attractive power, by which GOD is crushing our own nature, in order that there may be free course—for that is the meaning of all GOD's chastisements—in order that there may be free course in us for the full joyous progress of GOD the HOLY GHOST. GOD never wounds, except to heal; GOD never gives sorrow, except that out of the sorrow and the suffering there may come the joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Fifthly, and above all, that we cherish an unbounded trust, a patient, persevering trust; waiting GOD's time, resolved to believe not merely in the Word of GOD but in the Person of GOD; resolving, if need be, if GOD call us, to die in faith like the Old Testament saints, even if we have not received the full realization of the promises. Let us resolve that we will die with our Creed on our lips. Make up your mind, brethren, that this shall be your cry; resolve whenever and wherever you die, if you have ever really given yourselves up to CHRIST, resolve, whatever may be the assaults of the devil, to die with your Creed on your lips, saying, "What I see not now, I shall see, for GOD hath spoken; and what I feel not now I shall feel, for GOD never lies; I do not, I cannot doubt Him." You will try and say it when you die (will you not?) wherever it may be, however far it may be from the old church in which we have worshipped together. Say, "I stagger not at the promise of GOD, though all is

dark around." Yes! my brother, with parched lips, it may be, and with that strange quivering voice of death, say with a confidence that all the powers of hell cannot crush, speak out with a faith strong in proportion to the bodily weakness, "Thanks be to GOD Who gives me the victory in JESUS CHRIST my LORD; thanks be to GOD the HOLY GHOST, the Author and the Giver of life."

Thus we have seen the doctrine, and we have seen the method by which man is to co-operate with this living Person.

Now, praying the HOLY SPIRIT to control, restrain, and guide my words, I desire to bring before you another thought.

Let us look for a little while at the principle of the text, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." S. Paul, in the chapter before us, is giving one special application of this principle. We will rather for a few moments fix our thoughts on the principle itself, and, in order to understand about what we are speaking, let us see what we mean by this word "natural."

Now, of course, as you know, you and I have a double nature. It requires a little thought here, brethren, or you lose the after-teaching. You and I have in us, in our personality, a twofold nature. We have inherited from Adam what we call a human nature. We have been made, through God's mercy, partakers of a Divine nature. There is a divine and there is a human nature. Now of course you will understand, any of you who really think of it, that all which would be natural to that portion of us which is divine, would be supernatural to that portion of our twofold personality which is human; just as the life of the plant is supernatural to the stone, and the life of angels supernatural to man in the ordinary

acceptation of the words. So the part of us which is merely human (speaking in common language and not guarding every word) naturally would consider things to be supernatural, which to the angels (who look at us as simply beings of God's new and divine creation) appear an ordinary, commonplace part of our normal life.

By "natural," we do not mean that which is natural in the real sense of our true being, as partakers of the Divine nature ; but that which is in the ordinary acceptation of the word called "natural." It is the ordinary outcome of our human life, putting aside for the moment our Baptism, our regeneration, our spiritual being, communicated from CHRIST, the living Vine. The truth, then, which the Apostle brings out is this : that in the general order of God's providence that which is natural comes first, and afterwards, spiritual development.

For example, although some children are wonderfully born at their Baptism (like John the Baptist, "wonderfully born"), and filled with the HOLY GHOST from their earliest infancy, still, as a general rule, you see in the child in its earlier years the natural development of ordinary kindness, or gentleness, or selfishness, or whatever it may be : the development of the nature it has inherited from its parents. And here I would say, in passing, that it is very desirable for parents to remember that the faults in their children come from themselves. Consequently, it is hard for us to blame our children, however much we may try to correct the faults, because they are reproducing the nature of their parents or grandparents. That which is natural comes first in the ordinary life of the child. Just as God first developed on earth the natural life, and only, after ages of preparation, at Pentecost sowed the seeds in the Church of the spiritual life, so it is now.

Therefore we must be very careful not to fall into

the popular mistake of despising what is natural. Christian people fall into a terrible mistake when they undervalue mere "natural" habits, as they are called: habits of obedience, habits of punctuality, habits of order. There is no right habit, however trifling it may appear, that is not divine, even though it be what we call "natural." And there is given to us a distinct promise that if a man or a child will begin by ordering his conversation aright, by simply carrying out what we call the natural principles of truth, and obedience, and honesty, or whatever else you like to call them—mark the words—"to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

But while in the first place we recognize that the natural comes first, and while we jealously guard the natural from being considered as not from God, the Author of every good and perfect gift, we see, in the third place, that God has reserved some better thing for us: that we (our natural being) should not be perfected without the incoming of something higher, something of which our LORD spoke when He said, "Ye must be born from above."

I only touch on some illustrations, hoping, please God, on another opportunity further to develop the thought.

This higher influence comes first from above, and then through the indwelling of God in us. For example, see what a man does when he has been thoroughly led by God the HOLY GHOST. (Do not here be disturbed, persons may be good, earnest Christians, and yet not be thoroughly led by God the HOLY GHOST.) When we are thoroughly led by the HOLY SPIRIT we are taught in the Bible to expect that instead of merely submitting—mark the difference—merely submitting to some law (the law of conscience, or a law of the land, or a law of the

Church, or whatever you like) there shall be in us an impulse, a love of what is good and pure and beautiful, that shall come out as naturally in obedience to God's law, as the devil's life comes out in acts of open wickedness.

Or another illustration. We are taught to expect some changes in our point of view after the HOLY GHOST has had a freer course in us. We have known—good in itself—mere natural sorrow. There is the mere natural sorrow that the drunkard feels for his intemperance and its results; the mere natural sorrow that the child feels for having pained its parents or lost a holiday; the mere natural regret that an old man feels when the pulse is beginning to get weaker and strength is ebbing and he looks back upon not one single profitable thing done or one profitable word spoken in an entire life; the regret for unused opportunities that a man feels when he sees opening before him on that death-bed the great company of angels, the Majesty of God, the glorious society of angels and archangels and principalities and powers, a beautiful system of law which he has never learnt, a beautiful system of order of which he has never tried even to master the first principles; the mere natural regret that every one must feel if, having been put into this world as a school and not having learnt a single lesson, he is quite unfit, even if he were admitted into heaven, for the companionship of God and the angels. Now, we are taught to expect that, instead of all this mere natural sorrow, there shall be wrought in us by the HOLY GHOST, a chastened—I had almost said happy—sorrow for sin. There is a bitter pain for having grieved the loving Spirit, and yet side by side with the sorrow comes a happy consciousness that, in spite of all our waywardness, that love has continued to save us yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Next, there is a very practical truth for earnest Christians ; it shall be put shortly, because it will not have much meaning to those not fighting the good fight of faith. There is a time (known only to GOD) of transition from the natural order to the spiritual order in our life, at the time when GOD is intending to begin a real development in us of conscious spiritual life. It may come over and over again. Very often these transitions come from the natural to the spiritual order, one part of the natural order transformed to the spiritual, and so on, at different epochs of our life. Whenever any of these changes of our outer being occur, whenever GOD is going to develop a higher spiritual being in us, then there comes the manifestation of the great truth of which S. Paul gives an illustration in this chapter from the Corinthians. You remember he is describing there how, just before the grain of corn develops into the blade that is to come up from it, and afterwards the full ear—so that seventy times seven, even to millions of grains, may spring from it—it appears to man to die.

Just as in the natural creation, when any insect is going to be manifested in a more beautiful form, there is a putting off of the old with a sort of death ; so be prepared, Christian people, for a dark time just before the higher spiritual life is poured into your souls. In this, as in other senses, we pass through the grave and gate, as it were, of death to arise into a resurrection life of higher beauty and more spiritual development.

So oft-times a man says, "I am losing my nerve ; I have nothing of the old pluck left." That is the sound, the voice, of the wind that blows where it lists ; "and thou hearest the sound, but canst not tell whence it comes or whither it goes." It is the harbinger of the work of the HOLY SPIRIT Who dwelleth in us,

Who is going to give thee, in place of merely physical pluck, spiritual, divinely implanted courage.

You may often hear Christian workers say, "My interest in the district and in the Sunday School is declining, my faith in God is weak, my hope seems to be all going." Then the devil says, "It has all been a delusion." Believe him not, my brethren, it is simply that those natural graces which have been nurtured in some quiet Christian home must die, in order that the Divine resurrection life, that will abide with you for eternity, may be manifested.

Therefore, brethren, die that spiritual death bravely, as, please God, we have resolved to die the physical death when it comes, however we may shrink from it.

The last thought now for all of us, whether fighting the good fight of faith or not, is this: it is one thing to live in the dispensation of the Spirit; it is very different to be conscious of, and to know that you are living in, the dispensation of the Spirit.

It is one thing to come to church, as you have all come, and heard truths that I have been afraid to utter—about which clergy pray in the vestry that God would "grant that what we teach to others may never rise up in judgement against ourselves." You have heard truths about God's kingdom that angels would tremble to publish, lest they should be adding to the responsibility of a single soul. [Oh, it is a widely different thing to have a sermon floating over our ears without it ever entering into our heart. The LORD GOD does not go about to condemn His children. The LORD GOD would rather make an excuse (to speak in human words) for His poor wayward ones, who are so sorely tried by the world and the flesh and the devil. The only thing that He cannot and will not bear with is, deliberate tampering with a conscious sense of what is right and true, accord-

ing to the mind of GOD, a deliberate halting between two opinions.]

But I say the LORD GOD does not go about to condemn His children; and therefore the last few solemn words I have to speak to you may not apply to one-tenth of those who are now sitting in this church, although, as I have said, they have listened to some of the most tremendous truths: truths of which GOD Himself has pronounced, that if a man deliberately sin against them, there is no forgiveness, though the Jews who nailed CHRIST to the Cross were afterwards forgiven in thousands.

One thought I now wish to leave with the few, it may be, who have understood the teaching. My brethren, you and I now know that when a voice in us is applying the Word of GOD to our souls, any feeling which we possess for the higher, better life is not a natural impulse to us; we know that it is not merely the voice of the conscience that spoke to Socrates in the olden days; we know that it is GOD, GOD the HOLY GHOST dwelling in us, alive as the man or woman sitting next to you in that seat.

If the drunkard would not like the mother that prayed over him to see him tottering through the streets; if the girl who knows that she is grieving the LORD JESUS CHRIST could not bear Him to stand behind her and listen to those words spoken and that evil thought indulged; if all of us cannot bear to do our deeds of darkness in the bright light of the presence of those we love: I ask you, Christian believers in GOD the HOLY GHOST, have you realized that the voice in you is GOD's voice Who lives there? To turn a deaf ear is to fight against GOD, and to resist nothing less than the HOLY GHOST. It is to use the freedom that the great GOD has given us (to separate us from the

lower animal creation) in deliberate tampering with our inwrought convictions, in a deliberate palliation of that which He has taught to be wrong, and in a deliberate procrastination that is content to say to the Living God, "Sit quiet in my heart, speak not until the season is over ; speak not till the money is gained ; speak not till the temptation is conquered ; speak not to me, O GOD the HOLY GHOST, for I cannot and I will not listen."

My dear brethren, the joy and the glory of the spiritual life is ours, but the responsibilities of it are ours also, for the LORD GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, hath said, he that makes light of it, he that despises these breathings within, despiseth not man but GOD.

From all that blindness of heart, from all that contempt of GOD, may the good LORD deliver us !

VII

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterwards that which is spiritual.”—I COR. xv. 46.

TAKING the word “natural” in its ordinary sense, we have seen that while Almighty God is the Author of all good gifts ; that while what are called natural graces, natural endowments, natural virtues, and the like, are by no means to be despised, but to be held in honour for the sake of Him by Whom they were created ; that while it is perfectly necessary for us, especially in dealing with children, to thank Almighty God for any sign of mere natural virtue that we see exhibited in their ripening years ;—still God has prepared for us, in these latter days, something better than the mere natural endowments with which a Socrates, or even an Israelite under the old Covenant, might expect to be endowed.

We have seen that it is the prerogative of God the HOLY GHOST to develop out of this old nature of ours—fallen, yet retaining in itself something of the image of God—a new creation, a divine being, fit for the companionship of the angels in the realms of the redeemed. We have seen that all the circumstances of our life, all that happens to us of joy and of sorrow, all the friends or the enemies by whom

we are encompassed, when once we have believed in GOD the HOLY GHOST—and oft-times before we have believed in Him, unconsciously, through His grace abounding, flowing ever beyond all that has been asked or thought—can be made by Him into the instruments by which this glorious, this regenerate, this immortal, this incorruptible nature, can be developed and made fit for the appearing of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Next, I bring before you three aspects of the working of GOD the HOLY GHOST. It is obvious that if He be (as we have seen He is) very GOD, worshipped and glorified equally with the FATHER and the SON, of one substance with the FATHER and the SON, though separate from them in His Divine personality; if GOD is living in us, it is obvious that all the work of the HOLY GHOST must of necessity have relation to GOD. “He that is of GOD,” saith JESUS CHRIST, “speaketh the things of GOD”; much more must He Who is GOD bear witness to the ever-blessed Trinity, as He liveth in us in order to reveal. And if you carry this thought with you, you will have in it a mark whereby to distinguish that which is merely natural from that which is distinctly spiritual.

1. The HOLY GHOST puts GOD in His proper position in the soul of man.

2. He puts man in his proper relation to GOD; so long, I mean, as he continues on this lower earth.

3. And then, by a long, gradual work of restoration, He uplifts man out of that condition in which he now is; He perfects the ideal of the Blessed Trinity in him; He makes him fit for that companionship of angels hereafter, for that gazing on the unveiled face of GOD, for which, in the long ages of a past eternity, he was predestinated.

That is the threefold work of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, with which we are concerned; of course, not limiting the

work of the Blessed Spirit to anything that finite man can conceive.

Now, first of all, the HOLY SPIRIT repairs the altar of GOD. Recall that symbolic action in Israel where all the main characteristics of the HOLY SPIRIT, the wind and the fire and the water, were brought into distinct prominence : in that work of restoration, preparing the way for the true Elisha, by which Elijah the prophet of GOD destroyed the worship of Baal in the land, and lifted up Israel into a new and regenerate life of surrender to GOD. The first work, as you remember, in that evening of the day—what a picture of this evening of the world's history, the latter days, the latter dispensation, as it has been called !—when men's strength was spent in fruitless efforts, when men's vain cries had gone up unheard and unanswered ; then calmly the prophet of GOD, or rather GOD the HOLY GHOST Who spake through the prophet of GOD, comes forth, and his first symbolic action is to repair the altar of GOD ! All man's mistakes have proceeded from his not choosing (as S. Paul says) to retain GOD in his knowledge. You can work it out in the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. So the HOLY GHOST, first of all, puts GOD into His proper position.

Now try to bring your attention to bear on this ; for however imperfectly the thoughts may be brought before you, they are thoughts worthy of our consideration. Try to grasp them, for they are somewhat difficult of apprehension. I am not speaking to children in Sunday School, but to educated men and women.

You must see how GOD the HOLY GHOST, Who liveth in your hearts and mine, will act directly upon the highest part of our being, the spirit, the "inner man," as it is called in the Bible.

All those who have studied the subject—whether

religious people or not—all who have studied the subject impartially, have acknowledged that there must be recognized certain facts in the experience of the human soul, facts gathered by a long induction, spread over many generations and the lives of countless saints. You must recognize such an immediate revelation of God made on certain remarkable occasions (not merely in the Bible, but since the canon of Scripture was closed) which are best described in ordinary language as “miraculous” and “supernatural,” although I would guard the more thoughtful amongst you against accepting those words without consideration. Such, for instance, was that vision of God of which S. Paul speaks, when a living Spirit took possession of his spirit, and he was borne up, he scarcely knew how, and heard in Paradise unspeakable words, that he was never allowed to clothe afterwards in human language; when he enjoyed direct intercourse with the Everlasting Trinity in a manner that is simply inexplicable. Such are those strange utterances, those unspeakably marvelous visions, which every clergyman—however matter of fact he may be—cannot help recognizing occasionally (very seldom perhaps, but occasionally) in those who have lived very near to God, and are just on the threshold, passing out into the world of spirits. This is the truth of which all that wretched “spiritualism” is a mere caricature; and it is strange—showing how God knows the need of the creatures that He has made—that numbers who have tossed aside religion, and never kneel at the Holy Table to be partakers of the Divine nature, can give themselves up, body, soul, and spirit, to delusions that require a thousand times more faith than to believe in Jesus of Nazareth.

We descend to that which we can (so to speak) recognize with our ordinary faculties—and here, again,

let me remind you that although the various thoughts must be given in a certain sequence, it does not follow that GOD the HOLY GHOST always deals with the soul in that precise order ; He speaks as He wills, just as "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth."

So we dwell for a few moments on God's work in its ordinary course : He first of all repairs the altar of GOD by enlightening the understanding. Of all the subtleties with which the devil has destroyed souls in the present day, few are more baseless, and, at the same time, more effective than that idea which he circulates, that religion has no scope for the understanding, that the mind of a man can find nothing in GOD's revealed Word, and in the working of GOD upon his mind. GOD begins by enlightening the understanding as a general rule. He gives unto us right notions about GOD. Man's heart is full of wrong notions, of errors, which have been planted there by the father of lies ; and so, in breaking down the altar of Baal and lifting up GOD to His proper place in the temple that He has redeemed, the mind of man must be enlightened.

For example, the HOLY SPIRIT brings a man by the study of the Bible, and by calm reflection, to understand that GOD loves him, and that GOD is a GOD of love. He brings us to see, next, that GOD is an Almighty GOD, that His power is infinite, that He can work in us (if we will let Him) a complete restoration, that "what is impossible with man is possible with GOD." He says so ; and, as a mere matter of thinking, you observe that, even if we have lived a very bad life, yet if we have yielded ourselves to GOD honestly and truly, GOD, as GOD, can just as easily create a clean thing out of the

unclean, as He first brought water out of chaos, and light out of darkness. The creative power of God—the power that God has of taking a soul and bringing it out restored, doing in a week or a year what a man might not accomplish in the ordinary course of his natural working in a life-time—is one of the right notions about God with which the understanding is enlightened.

Then, following close upon that, comes the right notion (following by hard logic, if you only use your minds) that if God is Almighty, that if God has the power of absolutely doing that which to a limited mind or to a limited power would be simply impossible, then, also, God can do all that in the Bible He professes to do. He can absolutely and for ever veil the past. It is not a mere boast, but the word of the Living God, “I will cast their sins into the depths of the sea.”

These are just some of the right notions which the HOLY SPIRIT gives to the understanding that He has enlightened as to the nature of God—the love of God; the absolute power of God; and the recreative, restoring, absolving power of God.

Closely following upon that there comes to the mind thinking it out, a conviction that this Living God has a right to say that there can be no part of our being taken out of His sovereign jurisdiction; that wherever we go, into pleasure or into business, alone or in society (as a matter, again, of mere hard logic) the Living God is everywhere the absolute LORD of our being, and He claims our obedience in our daily work or pleasure as much as when we are kneeling at the Holy Table and feeding upon the living Bread.

Next, He enlightens our mind. As a mere matter of understanding, just as the mind of a man appreciates a picture, or sees beauty in the glorious tiers of mountains rising in these distant Alps, so the HOLY GHOST

teaches the understanding to see that there is something very noble in "GOD manifest in the flesh." As we read the life of JESUS of Nazareth, although our heart may be still cold as the driven snow—our mind sees His was a noble Life. Infidels have said it, you know. It is a grand self-denying life, an utter abnegation of self, that is manifested in the course of JESUS of Nazareth from the cradle to the grave. When we see Him in all the varied aspects of life, our intelligence recognizes Him as worthy of admiration. That is the work of the understanding.

Next, the HOLY SPIRIT brings the heart into operation—the heart, with all its manifold play of feeling and its infinite emotion. He brings the heart that it may fasten itself, as it were, upon these right notions, and draw near to that Person Whose Life and Being have thus been grasped with the understanding. For example, He gives faith to lay hold of the absolving power; He gives hope to lay hold of the re-creating power; so that the man, with a real inward feeling, hopes. He looks forward to being made absolutely perfect by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, if not in this life, at least in the life to come. Then comes that which we crave for when we have said—how often we have said it—"I understand it all, my intellect accepts it; I know it is true; but I cannot feel it." Then comes into play the emotional part of man's nature; then GOD the HOLY SPIRIT—living in us, observe, and therefore able to work upon us from within, and so to accomplish what could never be done from without—the HOLY SPIRIT, living in us, gives us the faith, gives us the love, gives us the hope, so that we fasten with our heart's best affections upon that Being Who is "altogether lovely." And then is created a calm, deep, restful sense—O my brethren, I wish that we all realized it more! We

might know it ; the saints of GOD are acquiring it all around us—that calm restful sense that the past is forgiven : that quiet assurance that GOD, Who has begun the good work, will never leave it unfinished till the day of CHRIST's appearing. Afterwards will come the passionate emotion, the burning enthusiasm, that solemn longing to do anything rather than sin, to do anything rather than disappoint the GOD Who dwelleth in us, the GOD Who died for us on Calvary, the FATHER Who loves us and is watching every step in our onward progress. Taking here especially the LORD JESUS CHRIST—the tender human Saviour, the Almighty GOD, very GOD as well as very Man—witnessing for JESUS CHRIST, the HOLY SPIRIT creates in us those passionate longings which have been the mainspring of a life of devotion ; that faith, and hope, and love that will last on through the burning heat, as well as in the springtide ; that faith, and hope, and love that come from within, like the well of water of which CHRIST spake, springing up into everlasting life ; that love of GOD Incarnate by which the world can be subdued, and men are made strong (aye, and weak women, too) to live, and to suffer, and with joy, if need be, to die.

I have almost anticipated here the next special action of the HOLY SPIRIT. Having enlightened the understanding, having warmed the heart, He brings into obedience the will with its definite resolves. The letter has been clearly written ; the wax has been melted by the warm emotion ; then GOD's seal is put upon it all : "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O GOD."

The reason why religion in many cases has fallen into disrepute, as being a mere thing for the feelings, is that the work of the HOLY GHOST upon the understanding and upon the will has not been properly recognized. And the reason why missions, and all the more en-

thusiastic works of GOD'S Church, have been disparaged is that men have fixed their minds exclusively on the understanding and on the will, and have ignored the action of the Blessed Spirit upon the heart with its emotions.

This, then, is the first work of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT. He repairs the altar of GOD in the heart.

And if you have followed me here, the second division will be comparatively easy. The HOLY SPIRIT, if He is to do a real work—and it were irreverent to imagine the HOLY GHOST as not perfecting His work—the HOLY SPIRIT must show us the truth.

Now, what is the truth? What is the fact that sooner or later we all discover? What is it? Are we perfect? Is it easier to do right than wrong? Is it easy to keep our resolutions; to crucify the flesh, to stand against the world, and so forth? Is it? No. And why not? Why is it that the nature created in the image of GOD does not naturally apprehend GOD, and love GOD, and yield up itself to GOD? Why? Because man has fallen. Account for it as you like; bewilder yourselves as you please with theories as to the origin of evil; the facts unhappily cannot be ignored. Make a resolution to-day, come back next year, and tell GOD how it has been kept. You will not need any one to prove to you that the flesh lusteth against the spirit; the lower nature against the higher; that the world and the flesh and the devil have gained a mighty power over this renewed spirit that was created in the likeness of the Blessed Trinity.

Therefore, the second work of the HOLY SPIRIT is to reveal to man—observe here—his present relation to GOD; in other words, to show him that he is a sinner in the presence of the Holy Trinity. Here,

again, the HOLY SPIRIT works by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

The HOLY GHOST then convinces of sin. Here you have exactly the same course that we followed in the first division. Sometimes there are what we call supernatural, almost miraculous, actions of the HOLY SPIRIT upon the spirit of a man, quite as wonderful as the effect of that one word on S. Paul, when he fell to the ground and surrendered himself then and there to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I must give but two instances. I remember how, in this church, a soul that had remained untouched by numberless sermons, was broken down and turned to GOD for life, by just these words, "JESUS CHRIST went out." The subject was CHRIST teaching in the Temple at Jerusalem, His pleading with a soul and then leaving it; and these were the words, "CHRIST went out"; that was all. There was nothing in the words, but they caused the most thorough breaking down, with tears and agony unspeakable, issuing in a joyous peace and a holy, consistent life. This was what I may call a direct act of the Spirit of GOD upon that immortal soul. I remember another instance where a calm, solemn sermon on the words, "Be still," had a similar effect. "Be still," that was all. Those were the words uttered, but the HOLY GHOST laid hold of that spirit, broke it down, and drew out of it the most humbling acknowledgements of sin and started it (it is years ago) on a course of holy life from which it has never departed. These are but two out of many instances I could give you, out of my own note-book, of the direct action of the HOLY GHOST in the conviction of sin.

Now, the blessing of such instances is this, it gives such a faith to our prayers. It is just as easy for the wind to lay low a whole forest, as to refresh your fore-

head or mine upon a hot July afternoon. In a moment the whole of this congregation might be kneeling, utterly regardless of all the opinion of the world, saying, like the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, "What must I do to be saved?" Sometimes at a mission we see a man come in and laugh at it all; and before the end of the week (nobody knows how, but silent prayer has been offered for the man who laughed at the beginning of the mission) we missionaries have almost always found just such a man come again with most utter humiliation. GOD has touched the soul, and a man cannot continue to laugh when GOD speaks.

Coming down to the more ordinary experience, through which each of us (or at least many of us) have passed, the HOLY SPIRIT first enlightens the understanding by showing us that inward sin is guilt, that wicked thoughts are wicked, that wicked feelings indulged are as much sin as the overt act which the world recognizes.

The HOLY GHOST dwelling within us shows us that the things that have been left undone, with our time, our money, our life, the nursing of self, the ignoring of the claims of GOD—all that we call sins of omission—the HOLY GHOST, living in us, brings to our remembrance. He goes on calmly enlightening the understanding, teaching it out of the Bible its secret sins, and obliging it (as a mere matter again of hard intellectual work) to acknowledge that if Christianity is true, and if the Bible has any meaning, then each must confess: I have sinned because I have had wicked thoughts, and I have indulged them; I have allowed things to be left undone which ought to be done; I have sinned in thought, if not in word or in deed.

Then the HOLY GHOST enlightens the understanding as to the intolerable presumption of a created being (like an atom in the deep ocean, like a tiny gossamer in this

great atmosphere by which we are surrounded) having dared to question the will of the Omnipotent, having dared to rebel against a GOD in Whom it lived, and moved, and had its being.

The same sort of rational understanding that convicts a person under authority of insubordination or want of proper respect to his earthly master, the same understanding, enlightened by the HOLY GHOST, confesses that its life has been a life of presumptuous rebellion. We see that our life has been a self-pleasing, self-indulgent ignoring of GOD : the GOD Whom all creation worships, the GOD to Whom all nature raises the unending anthem of praise and thanksgiving, the GOD to Whom the great chorus is ever rising of willing, loving submission. We see that against that harmony we have transgressed, that against that GOD we have rebelled, with an intolerable presumption, which we should not allow in a child or in an earthly servant.

And then the HOLY GHOST brings out the life of CHRIST—I have so often preached on that thought that I do not dwell upon it so much—brings out, as a matter of calm understanding, the ingratitude of letting CHRIST die on Calvary, and then refusing to come unto Him that He may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. The HOLY SPIRIT, I say, having enlightened the understanding, softens the heart, and brings out what S. Paul speaks of as “the indignation” with ourselves, the “fear” lest GOD may cut us off in the midst of our sin. It leads to an unutterable “sorrow,” like the sorrow of S. Peter when he saw the face of JESUS CHRIST and went out and wept bitterly.

So you see the spiritual letter is written with the understanding, and the warm heart's emotions melt the wax, and then comes the seal : a life-long repentance, accompanied by a joy which you have never tasted if you

do not know JESUS CHRIST. There is a joy in union with JESUS CHRIST ; it is a greater happiness, believe me, than any of the earthly joys which we have tasted in our earlier life, however happy we may then have been—and many of us were very happy.

There comes an unutterable sadness, mingled with an unspeakable joy, as the will resolves to be penitent all its life, and yet joyful, rejoicing in the LORD, and full of faith and hope and love.

So, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, I have tried hurriedly to lead you on through the great triumphant working of the HOLY GHOST. I have tried, by His own blessed help, to unfold to you some of the ways in which He enlightens the understanding, warms the heart, and gains the will. The modes of His action differ in different cases. As a general rule, He begins at the outside and reverses the order when dealing with the world ; He begins from the centre and works out to the circumference when acting upon the regenerated believing spirit.

One caution only. Never be disturbed if at different times in your life—I am speaking to those who believe in JESUS CHRIST—you seem to lose all hold upon GOD and unseen verities. That is the way in which the HOLY GHOST creates a hunger, which is the pledge of after satisfaction. Dwell upon the symptoms of hunger : the void, the pain, the weariness, the utter disgust with everything ; and then apply that to the spiritual life, and whenever that void is felt, look on it as the divinely created hunger, and carry out the teaching of Psalm xlv. : though God may smite you into the place of dragons, never hold up your hand to any strange god, still less forget the Covenant. Hold on by GOD, and out of that death another resurrection shall be accomplished ; for all the

life of the regenerate soul is a succession of dying and a succession of resurrections.

GOD enable you, who believe, to lay hold on that truth : and to all of you, as the last word now, believe, I pray you, in this blessed truth of the new dispensation. You have no idea what you can become ; you have no idea as to the complete absolution ; you have no idea as to the complete re-creation of the most utterly fallen spirit. I have watched it every day in those whom GOD has given to me. It is marvellous—if we had not the promise of GOD to lead us to expect this—what a poor fallen sinner can become, and in how short a time the work of re-creation can be accomplished through the indwelling of the HOLY GHOST. Whatever the past has been, give yourself to GOD to be humbled, for GOD resists the proud. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of GOD.” Give yourself up to Him, and say : “O GOD, break my heart ; humble me ; crush this proud spirit ; take this self-will away ; show me—whatever it costs me, while I am alive, and while the door of hope is open—show me, my GOD, what an utter, wicked sinner I have been ! Oh, show me also Thy power, Thy compassion, Thy interest in my progress, Thine unfeigned love.”

Be of good cheer. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; but work it out with a good hope, because it is GOD Who is working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

VIII

GIFTS FROM ABOVE

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

S. JAMES i. 17.

IT is now important that we should clearly recognize the separation between mere intellectual gifts and those graces which are described in the Bible as the effects of GOD the HOLY GHOST working in us. As we are taught by Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones, GOD made the bones, GOD gave the sinews and the fair outward covering, just as much as He was the Author and the Giver of the spiritual life. But there is a distinction; and it is important that this distinction should be recognized, for two reasons :

First of all, lest we should remain satisfied with the mere natural gifts and graces with which GOD may have endowed us ; lest we should be satisfied with remaining in the condition of a Socrates or a Jew under the old Covenant, or a believer in CHRIST before the manifestation of Pentecost. There is something on which we congratulate ourselves when our boy has risen even to the fifth form ; but good and respectable as the position may be in itself, it would be a grievous pity if he were to remain content with that inferior place, when there was placed within his grasp, requiring only a little more faith and a little redoubled energy, the higher position of captain of the school and head of the sixth.

And, secondly, it is important, because without it

we fall into the most hopeless confusion. Unless we separate the work of GOD which is described as natural, which we share with the heathen, from the higher and the supernatural working, which is the characteristic of this new dispensation, we must fall into hopeless confusion. Lovable natures, natures that GOD in His providence has made from the beginning amiable, without strong passions, without great tendencies either to unbelief or to yielding to the lusts of the flesh, or what not, become uplifted. They mistake that which they have inherited from their parents for the fruits of GOD the HOLY GHOST given in answer to prayer, and to Sacraments, and a hearty surrender of the whole being to the LORD and Giver of life.

And on the other hand, persons with rugged natures, with strong downward tendencies, are dispirited, as if they had no part nor lot in the matter; whereas the very downward tendency is intended by Him Who overcometh evil with good to provoke them by the very degradation of their falls, to rise out of that depth of iniquity unto the highest peak of the everlasting hills whereon the sunlight never sets.

Take one instance. We all see at once that it is ridiculous to say that religious zeal is necessarily the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, that because I am active and energetic in my parish, therefore I have specially yielded to the HOLY SPIRIT, or am specially led by Him. It is obvious, the moment the fact is put before us, that mere earnestness, the mere natural desire to work and to do things as well as you can, is a natural gift; very good in its way, a great blessing if it is properly used and not left undisciplined to drag us into undue excess. But in itself it is a mere natural gift; and of course (if you try to follow me with your mind, not merely to listen to a general declamation, but really to think of what I am

saying) you will see at once that it matters not whether we spend this natural energy upon religious work or upon secular work, it still remains natural zeal; it is natural energy even unto the end. Just as a river may be coloured indeed by the character of the stratum through which it flows, but in its essential qualities remaineth the same, the same as the fountain from which it originally proceeded, even so we may be spending an intensity of energy upon the most holy work; but if it is mere natural energy, it is natural to the end, as much as if we spent it in declaiming as the leaders of some great democratic revolution.

The Pharisees were remarkably earnest, God says so. They compassed sea and land to make a proselyte; and yet we know they were utter hypocrites, certainly not led by the Spirit of God; they were mere whited sepulchres, without a particle of God the HOLY GHOST really entering into their being.

It is a remarkable psychological fact, that men of profligate habits intensely enjoy singing hymns, that they are most quickly worked up into a religious enthusiasm; they, and utterly worldly women—those two classes, women who are living entirely to the world, and men who are yielding to their lower nature—are immediately taken with a mighty religious enthusiasm, and will sing the most heavenly hymns, without a particle of real living spiritual life pervading their being.

Therefore it is important that this should be clearly understood; because, apart from the instance given to you, how often it is confused, how very often you hear people say, "That is a good man; that is a good woman; see how full of good works they are; see how active and energetic; all his time spent on one committee after another; all her energies devoted to the cause of God's Church."

Secondly, another important point. In all our strivings after the development of the higher life, it is important that we begin as GOD and the Church taught us to begin, with the Creed, "I believe in GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST."

Of course there is a blessed benefit in self-examination, in introspection, in all that side of the Christian life about which I have so often spoken to you. But as our LORD said when He was on earth, so will it be even to the end. If we are to be subjected to the influence of the HOLY GHOST, we must begin "from above." No amount of struggling to bring ourselves into a condition in which we can claim the power of the HOLY SPIRIT will ever land us in anything but hopeless despair. We should start with this: that "this is the will of GOD, even our sanctification"; I am GOD's workmanship, I have been "created in CHRIST JESUS unto all good works," which GOD, before I was born, prepared for me, and He intended that I should walk in them. That text turned a man who had merely been a believer in CHRIST and at peace with GOD, but a powerless Christian, into one who has ministered now to the spiritual life of thousands: that one thought breaking on his mind, that GOD had created him for the very object that he might be holy, that he might walk in good works, that he might abound in the fruits of the Spirit.

It is important not merely to begin but to carry on that thought. When, for example, we find our own progress very slow, when we find ourselves continually falling back, we sink into utter despondency unless we remind ourselves that GOD never changes; that it is GOD the HOLY GHOST Who is working in us; that it is GOD Who wills that we should be sanctified.

If we fall again and again, then we must examine ourselves, of course. "Am I using all the means of

grace? Am I going to Holy Communion as frequently as my spiritual digestion will allow? Am I steadfast in my Bible-reading, and my prayers, and my works of love, and so forth? Am I wilfully resisting His influence by any sin knowingly indulged, any duty wilfully omitted?" Of course we must ask ourselves these questions; but this mere questioning will not deliver us from the paralyzing effects of a fall, of having made little progress, of having sunk down unexpectedly under the power of the devil or the world or the flesh. But if it is the habit of our life to begin and continue and end with GOD—in GOD to live and move and have our being, as it were—then we remind ourselves that "the husbandman waiteth long for the precious fruits of the earth," and therefore we may also patiently wait with confidence even if the work of our sanctification appeareth to be delayed beyond that which in earlier life we had ventured to anticipate.

So also with the little battles of life, the same principle, believe me, applies. When you begin the battle, you will find how every word of this is of vital importance. It has been brought out of the experience of GOD's saints for nineteen hundred years—all these words that I am speaking to you to-day! When the evil arises we cast ourselves on GOD. We recognize the sudden impulse of the lower nature, the angry feeling, the envy, the jealousy, the pride, or what not—although we cast ourselves upon GOD, no deliverance seems to come. Thus comes the trial. If we are impetuous, if we are accustomed to look inward instead of steadfastly fixing our mind and heart on GOD, then our faith goes, we lose our head, we drift on like a rudderless ship, and, unless GOD avert the catastrophe, we are dashed to pieces on the rocks.

But if it has become the habit of our life (having once reminded ourselves that GOD lives) to trust that soul of

ours to Him in the moment of trial, in the midst of society, wherever we are—the HOLY GHOST, Who lives in us, is everywhere with us—having trusted ourselves to Him, it becomes natural in the higher life to trust Him and to wait.

And then perhaps the strong wind rends the mountain, the strong wind of temptation, and the LORD seems not to be in the wind. And then there comes the earthquake, the loud outward clash—it may be a result of the wayward tempers of those amongst whom we may have to work in the ordinary course of our daily routine—and the LORD seems not to be with us. We are desolate even in the earthquake. And then there comes the strong fire, the fire of trial that seems to burn out the very inmost being, and the LORD is not in the fire. But we wait patiently, like the prophet of Horeb in his cave, wrapped round with the mantle of the Redeemer's righteousness, and then we look forth, and we hear the still small Voice, and we see that the arrow of prayer was not in vain. The still Voice has spoken peace; and in the quiet evening, as we look back on the day, we say, "I thought the LORD had forsaken me: I said my GOD had forsaken me." Can a woman forget her child? Yea, she may forget, yet, saith GOD, I will never forget thee, for I have graven thee on the palms of My hands continually. And all that would have been lost if we had never recognized the meaning of the Creed, that the HOLY GHOST must do as He will, because He is the LORD. "I believe in the HOLY GHOST," my LORD. "It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Let me to-day simply remind you of what was sketched out last Sunday, and then practically apply it in the briefest possible manner. And those of you who know the power of the Blessed Spirit will help me, that

if I speak so as to weary the poor tired ones who have strayed in after a hard week's work in this London world, I may be taught of God when to speak and also when to be silent.

We now recall the words in the final Blessing, "the peace of God"—in brief, the work of the HOLY SPIRIT—keeps our minds and our hearts in the knowledge and the love of God. As we are aware, without ignoring the direct action of the Spirit of which we spoke last time, He first uses the understanding and gives us right notions of things. And then He takes the emotions, and He brings them into the work : creating either love or fear from within—always from within, not from without. He uses outward means, but it is from within that the HOLY SPIRIT works, creating love or fear or whatever it may be. And then we pass on. If I am speaking here to any man who is trained in habits of thinking, he will understand what I mean—when you have grasped a thought after long study, you know the sort of instinctive joy felt, a far better joy than anything which mere natural enjoyment can afford. Well, that is a parallel case. The HOLY SPIRIT, having given the right notion to the understanding, creates a passion—joy or hope or fear or whatever it may be. And so, having melted the wax of our complex nature, He brings the will to bear, and the will takes God's seal and stamps it for ever.

Then GOD the HOLY SPIRIT brings the body to work ; makes it get up in the morning, makes it not dawdle at night but go to rest, makes it go out on the hot afternoon to see the sick man or woman, instead of thinking it will do when the wind has changed. Because the poor weak body regards the action as work for God, He sends it out with a renewed strength and vigour : they shall mount up like eagles, they shall

run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint; because it is the Giver of life that dwelleth in them.

So in the ways we have seen He repeats the symbolic action of the great prophet of fire. He first repairs the altar of GOD; puts GOD in His proper place; not as man loves to have it, self first, neighbour second, GOD third; but GOD first of all. He commands us to love the LORD our GOD. And after the altar is repaired, then, as Elijah did, He divides the Sacrifice, He puts each part of our complex nature into its appointed place, each subordinated according to GOD's primeval decree—the intelligence, and the emotion, and the will, and the body—each in its own appointed place, bringing order out of the wretched chaos into which sin has hurled our poor fallen humanity. And then, as the prophet poured the water three times over the sacrifice, so the HOLY GHOST cleanseth us by the mingled life of repentance and of faith, washing away with a life-long repentance the stains of the past—by the fire sent down from heaven that consumeth the sacrifice—revealing to us the glorious power of the atoning Blood, of the restoring Spirit, and the never-failing compassion of the Eternal FATHER. So, as I say, by this mingled cleansing of repentance and the fiery coming down of supernatural life upon this sacrifice laid in order upon the altar, the HOLY GHOST burns out the evil and develops in us a mighty faith. I am not referring to the reasons for faith that there may be in our progress or in the progress of the Church, but only to that which He develops from within. Then, with this fire within, He kindles faith and enables us to hope on to the end, and gives us that love of CHRIST by which all social differences are at once reconciled. Some men have much of this life's honour, but only then they may account it as a joy, because in their great love for GOD

and man they have great opportunities of imitating CHRIST, Who sacrificed everything for the good of others. Equally if men are poor, they may rise up and count their poverty a holy estate, because in their great love for CHRIST they rejoice to copy Him exactly, Who had not even a place where to lay His head, Who was the Child of a poor woman, born in a manger, and dying on Calvary.

And so carrying on still that symbolic action we read of in 1 Kings xviii, the HOLY SPIRIT then takes us up to the everlasting hills. Like Elijah, we cast ourselves down upon the earth, and an inwrought sense of utter nothingness and humiliation and weakness is effected in us: as it was wrought at last, after three years' patient discipline, in the heart of S. Peter on that night when upon the melted wax the stamp of GOD'S Divine will was for ever sealed.

Utterly humbled, we cast ourselves like Elijah upon the ground; and we watch, looking upwards; and we find that mightier results are now accomplished by our instrumentality than we ever ventured to anticipate in the days when we were depending upon physical strength and the power of our mental vigour, and the practical wisdom and skill that GOD might have given us in the manifold relations of life. We find our power in lying on the ground as nothing, and using the threefold Name, and looking seven times for the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit; so GOD Who is in us, GOD Who rules the world, GOD Who has all power in heaven and in earth, through our utter feebleness accomplishes that which to have anticipated previously would have been simply the dreams of a fanatic. We look at the great far-off sky and see it is covered with clouds; and we see GOD'S rain, "the early and the latter rain in its season," descending on our hearts, our homes, and the Church of GOD; and we say, "This is from the LORD, this is from

GOD : glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST."

Very briefly we take the practical thoughts. Gather up your energy to receive them ; lift up your hearts to GOD dwelling in you, to enable you never to forget them.

If I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the LORD and Giver of life, then it is utterly impossible for me ever to despair, for myself or for the Church of CHRIST in which He dwells. If you think of it quietly afterwards, you will see this. Does GOD the Creator live in us ? In one year He can restore all that the cankerworm and the locust have eaten. He can undo what ought to have been the natural results of your past wicked life. In one year, absolutely surrendered to Him, you will go forward so that you who are last to-day shall be first in the spiritual army before twelve months have passed, if GOD so wills. If you believe that the Giver of life is living in you, then the restoration, the re-creation, that can be accomplished in the weakest and most sinful, is simply beyond the power of human words to describe.

That which is true of the individual is true of the Church. Natural organizations rise, wither, and decay. But if the HOLY SPIRIT lives in the Church, it follows as a logical conclusion from the premises that He is GOD—work it out if you like in the strictest way—and if GOD dwells in the Church, then at any moment He, the Giver of life, can give life. He can, that is, create in a moment living men, out of these stones He can raise up children to Abraham, at any time. He first stirs in the Church a feeling of despondency and hunger ; then two or three begin to pray ; then in answer to the prayer He creates a hero or a leader ; it is quite as easy for GOD to call him out as to convert a little child in the Sunday School. GOD creates a hero, a man who has power to

go to Asia or Africa, or wherever you like, and convert a continent. He quickens the dormant energy of men in this our London—one here, one there—to spread an influence by which the whole outward appearance of this degraded society might be altered. Believe in the HOLY SPIRIT, and you can never despair as to the creation of power in yourself, or the creation of divinely born heroes for the regeneration of the Church of God.

Secondly, unless you bring to GOD the HOLY GHOST your Bibles, all that has been said and sung, in your mind will seem like a delusion. Try to feel it, try to think of it, and you will very soon be tired and give it up. Bring a text, and allow the HOLY GHOST to work on that text, and you will find that very soon, from within, such energy will be developed that the impulse which GOD has given you, not to receive the grace of GOD in vain, will be accomplished beyond all that yesterday you dared to hope. The Bible—a text brought to GOD the HOLY GHOST—is not only the means by which the world is converted, but that by which saints are edified.

I am not speaking now of the great sacramental feeding, when that blessed Body and Blood are given to us by the HOLY SPIRIT in our souls, so that, while the bread remains bread, and the wine is still wine, we are “strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of CHRIST.” I am speaking of the ordinary everyday outside life.

And, lastly, if you care for your own souls; if, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, GOD has answered your prayers for them, leave not the church to-day without kneeling down quietly (or, if you like it better, when you go home at night) in the solemn secret chamber of your own heart, think first of CHRIST dying, then think of CHRIST alive and loving you. Yield yourselves up to

Him as if you saw Him, and say, "O LORD, I cannot see Thee, I do not know what I shall have to do or to suffer, but by Thy help to-day I give myself to Thee. Let the Blessed Spirit have free course in me. O God the HOLY GHOST, I give myself to Thee to-day."

God help you to do it, dear people, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

IX

LIVING AND GROWING

“Every good gift . . . cometh down from the Father of lights.”—S. JAMES i. 17.

THE gifts we have spoken of, as bestowed upon our fallen humanity, appear to be simply supernatural; although, when looked upon in the light of the holy angels, when regarded by us as those who know that they have been by GOD'S goodness made partakers of the Divine nature, they appear to be merely the natural results, the natural outcoming, of that Divine nature which by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT has been communicated to us.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, when He took the manhood into GOD, filled humanity with all the various Divine perfections and communicated to it the fullness of the Godhead, so that in Him, the one Person, our Incarnate LORD, at the right hand of the FATHER, there dwelleth now all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. As truly as the LORD JESUS CHRIST thus brought down the fullness of Divine perfection into this fallen humanity of ours, so truly does GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, working within us, communicate to us through the Sacraments, through meditation and Holy Scripture, through the manifold ministries of life, the various portions of that nature of the LORD JESUS CHRIST which He may see to be specially required at different times of our life. According to our need, GOD the HOLY SPIRIT

at sundry times and in divers manners (forgive me for using a material illustration for a moment) takes that portion of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in which we are deficient, puts it, as it were, into the inner man wherein He Himself dwells, that so that portion of the perfect ideal which was previously wanting in us may be afterwards manifested in our life, having been communicated to us from the Perfect Man, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now, I need hardly say to you (our own experience teaches it to us only too quickly!) that it is a very remarkable thing to have been put by GOD into the dispensation of the Spirit, to be thus encompassed with Divinity, to have this GOD dwelling in us with all the wondrous power of the Godhead. It brings about a very different state of things thus to have been blessed by GOD, and to respond to the will of GOD so far as to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit and rule our thoughts and words and deeds according to the principles of the spiritual kingdom. A large number of persons whom it is impossible not to account in a certain sense as believers, yet live and walk altogether (or very nearly) in the flesh, so far as any outward difference is concerned. They walk according to the natural self-will of the fallen humanity. If their instincts are generous, their character is such as attracts the admiration of men; if their instincts are degraded, they are despised and looked upon as unworthy of the fellowship of the more educated and refined. But numbers of persons who in a sense know the LORD JESUS CHRIST, have never understood what the Church means when it talks of forsaking all fleshly affections, of living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and so forth.

Now, the thought which I wish to bring before you this afternoon is this: that so far as we are living in the flesh—living, that is, according to the old nature, sharing

only in the virtues of a Socrates, or a Jew before the coming of CHRIST, or a disciple before the outpouring of Pentecost—so far as we are living in the flesh and walking according to the flesh, all our virtues (whatever they be) become of necessity exaggerated. It is only when we have surrendered ourselves to GOD the HOLY SPIRIT that anything like a proper balance, anything like a right proportion, anything even approaching to a harmony of our nature, can be effected. But so far as we are living in the Spirit, living in communion with GOD the HOLY GHOST, living in the hourly habit of surrendering ourselves to His guidance, following His leading so as to fall down and confess our sin, or rejoice in the Saviour's Blood, or undertake some disagreeable work, or trust Him for deliverance from some disquieting thought : only so far as we are thus living in surrender to the HOLY SPIRIT is there any balance or harmony. But when we are thus guided by GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, Who dwells in us, He guards one virtue from exaggeration by developing another from within. This is not accomplished by our outward struggles to create it from without, but is the calm, quiet solemn work of the Blessed Comforter proceeding from the FATHER and the SON, day by day and hour by hour passing, as it were, in a great triumphal procession through the spirit, the heart and the very body of the regenerate man.

He will guard us from extravagance, and bring out something at least like the beautiful ideal that was present to the mind of the great Creator when He declared all things to be very good. And that which, of course, is not thoroughly accomplished in this life, that which we only know (many of us) by yearning to see it accomplished in our hearts, shall be one of the joys of that kingdom of fruition for which we are being educated.

I confine myself to-day to only one illustration of this thought, taken from the collect that is said on S. James's Day.

It would be easy to show you how the HOLY SPIRIT, when consciously weakening persons in order to create in them humility, balances that, delivers them from becoming morbid and useless, when breathing in at the same time, by the HOLY SPIRIT'S inspiration, strong confidence in the Living GOD. It would be easy to show you how, when GOD the HOLY SPIRIT has developed remarkable power in any Christian, so that he is going forth conquering and to conquer, comforting the minds of men, converting their souls, casting down imaginations, lifting up the banner of the Cross everywhere, He delivers him from all the natural evils that would follow on success, by quietly inspiring another grace, of patience, for example, or of humility, or of meekness ; and so, all unknown, oft-times scarce recognized by the individual himself, that gentle, loving Spirit—working in us with a mighty Divine energy worthy of One Who is very GOD, equal to the FATHER and the SON—that Blessed Spirit within us, all unknown it may be to the world, half unrecognized by ourselves, restores by Himself the proportion and the harmony of the human nature.

Now, the whole idea of a saint's day brings out one characteristic of the Christian life, without which all talking about religion is mere sentimentalism ; I refer to separation. When the HOLY GHOST spake in the Acts of the Apostles, He said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." And then we are told a little later on, that they, being pushed forth, as it were, sent forth out of the old companionship, out of the old surroundings, sent forth by the HOLY SPIRIT departed, like Abram, not knowing whither they went.

So, again, our Blessed LORD tells us that one sign of the higher life being accomplished in us—though we often see this sign caricatured—is that others who once were our friends separate us from their company, do not talk freely in our presence, do not confide in us as unreservedly as they used to do when they knew that we had precisely the same ideas on the various questions of religion that they themselves entertained. Blessed, our LORD says, are ye when men separate you, when the world separates you from its company, when you find that you are being quietly dropped. For CHRIST'S sake, of course, that must be, you observe.

Now, certainly the form which this separation takes varies in different ages and different characters.

Sometimes it takes a very simple form, such as it did with S. James. Herod had very little difficulty in separating the Apostle from his company. He stretched out his hand, killed S. James, and there was the end of him. He was separated off, without any doubt. So was it with Jeremiah, and S. Stephen, and a number of other martyrs and confessors. And judging by the experience of history, a very luxurious age generally prepares the way, in the children that come after, for a great uprising of brute force that soon puts Christians "out of the way," to use the common expression.

Sometimes the separation takes a different form. Our LORD spoke very sad words—they must have grieved Him—He said that He would not bring peace into many families. He wished to do it, He was the Prince of Peace; but there would come separation. So sometimes it comes in the form of outward parting the one from the other. The one is taken, and the other left. The call comes from within generally—though it may be afterwards endorsed—from within, for all real work of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT begins from within, however

much, as I have said, it may be endorsed. From within the impulse comes ; like the wind, we know not whence it came, or whither it is leading us. And after long thought and preparation and taking counsel with others, the soul feels bidden to depart, either to work in the hospital, or far hence on some mission work amongst the heathen. And then comes separation in a twofold form. The one goes out from home and friends ; and the other—I often think that this is the harder lot of the two, for which JESUS CHRIST has perhaps a special sympathy—the friend or the sister is left behind to the dull routine of an ordinary family life, with none of the excitement of mission work, with none of the feeling of self-sacrifice that comes to those who leave home and friends and go forth. Both the one that is taken and the one that is left learn the need of separation.

Or sometimes it simply comes without any outward alteration. Oh, how often have I watched it, between those who have loved each other so dearly ! The thoughts of the one seem to centre more on CHRIST, and the others who are merely living for the world become wearied and tired with the straining after a higher and more religious course. “Far was the call, and farther as I follow”—many a Christian in every age has realized what these words were :

“Far was the call, and farther as I follow,
Grows there a silence round my LORD and me.”

That, then, is the idea of all the service—collect, epistle, gospel, lessons—for any saint’s day ; it is separation. Then I need only in a very few words remind you that the lesson of love towards GOD is the one fruit of the HOLY GHOST without which everything else is like sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. We may have all gifts : power to influence, unbounded energy, strength

to grapple with difficulties, a charity that will part with every farthing to feed the poor ; but if in our heart there is no love to GOD, no love to man, then the work has yet to be begun, we have yet to pray for the breath of the Living Spirit that life may be given to the dry bones, however fair may have been the outward covering with which they have been shielded from the scorn of men. Nothing in the sight of GOD compensates for the want of love to men. No real work of the HOLY GHOST can be going on in our hearts unless at least the hungering and the thirsting for that love that thinketh no evil, for that love that beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things—unless, I say, the hunger for that love has been created in us by GOD the HOLY GHOST.

The very Apostle S. James had a long education. After the work of separation had been begun by the HOLY SPIRIT, he had to go forth. He wished to bring down the fire from heaven, “ You know not,” said the Divine Master, “ what spirit ye are of.” He was sent back to school till he learnt the Son of Man had not come to curse people but to bless them, not to destroy men’s lives but to save them. Separation, then, and love are two obvious fruits of the working of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Now observe how, taking the words in their ordinary sense, a loving, amiable spirit, or spirit of separation, unless guarded by GOD the HOLY GHOST, becomes exaggerated, and does more harm than good both to ourselves and others. And observe also how, when GOD the HOLY SPIRIT is reigning in the heart, the one so balances the other, that alike the love and the separation are hindered from degenerating into the merely fleshly character of sentimental pleasing of others, or of hard Pharisaical condemnation of others who differ from us.

A person is amiable. What is his natural tendency? To say things that will be pleasant all round; to say just what is the echo of the society in which his lot may be cast for the day. But if that person is given up to GOD the HOLY GHOST, He, working in him, forms the spirit of separation. He brings from without certain circumstances. He suggests to us, "You must say that disagreeable word; you must take that unpopular line, or you will be false to your King." And so the mere obeying GOD the HOLY GHOST, without any effort on our part, without any unnatural straining, will in the course of a few years issue in our being separated from all that is wicked, while it has drawn round CHRIST, through our example, whatever has been holy and good in those whom we are trying to influence. The love is saved by the spirit of separation wrought in us by GOD the HOLY GHOST from degenerating into softness and mere pleasing of those amongst whom our lot is cast.

So, on the other hand, there is nothing more repulsive, I imagine, nothing that really alienates people from religion more than the hard, stubborn, self-willed, judging people who are always condemning others. One is almost tempted, if it were not irreverent, to quote the saying of a modern preacher, that they are a class of people who, he hopes, will be sufficiently altered in heaven to make their society tolerable; but so long as they are on earth he would rather they went to a different church, and if possible lived in a different neighbourhood. It is a bitter, and I doubt whether it is a very wise, saying, but it certainly brings out strongly the defects of which we Christians (all of us) are only too conscious—that sort of rough, rugged saying of disagreeable things without regarding the feelings of the people whose hearts we are wounding; the simple giving out of what we think to be right without any consideration for

others ; the hard, rough conduct that will not think of brothers or sisters or parents or any one else in the family, but simply follows what "I who am separated, and am different from the others," feel to be right. And gradually you will find, if you indulge that spirit, how that which was holy and good at the beginning—for it was from a real sense of their own interest, a fear of being led away from CHRIST, a longing to be holy and to have the silence deepened between their LORD and their individual spirit, that this ruggedness first began—that which began, I say, so well, ends in a drying-up of the fountains of natural affection. It seems to be the glory and the pride of some religious people that they are losing all love for those to whom GOD has united them by causing them to be born in one family, to be brought up under one household.

But now observe : if GOD the HOLY GHOST lives in you and is working in you, and you are surrendering yourself to Him, it is impossible for GOD to be there without developing more and more of Divine love. And so, the more we become separate from people, the more the love for them increases : as in the case of S. Stephen, who, the more his persecutors threw the paving-stones around his head, prayed so much the more for them ; or as a greater than Stephen was only led by the conduct of His murderers to beseech His FATHER to forgive them. So the true children of GOD—and there are many I have watched here (thank GOD for it !) who are growing up in such a love—the true children of GOD, led by the HOLY SPIRIT, care more than they ever cared for the friends, the brothers, the sisters, and so forth ; even though they may be obliged in many things to separate themselves from what they feel to be irreligious, or worldly, or at any rate doubtful practices.

And so comes that fellowship with CHRIST's suffer-

ings. Fellowship with CHRIST's sufferings is not merely bearing bodily pain, though of course that is included ; it is not merely having great trials ; it is not merely, still less, gazing on Good Friday on the sacred wounds in a three hours' agony. Fellowship with CHRIST in His sufferings is bearing sufferings in the spirit of CHRIST ; so that the wife who feels separate from her husband by the fact of their not agreeing or sympathizing, is more than ever watchful, not merely to speak lovingly of him, but to love him, and prays God for Divine love to come down just in proportion as she feels that they are drifting in matters concerning faith or sympathy further and further from each other. And so there comes that real Christian suffering—a feeling of pain, and yet of loving the person more than ever in spite of the pain that he is inflicting.

Of course, my brethren, it is easy for me, with all the blessings GOD gives me, to talk in this way. But I am speaking to many of you who, I know, have this danger ; sometimes of letting love degenerate into mere sentimentalism, sometimes of letting separation develop into a mere self-pleasing Pharisaical isolation. Let GOD the HOLY GHOST have free course in you and be glorified, and then He will deliver you from this danger sooner or later.

Three short sentences—at least three short practical applications—and my words are ended.

First, remember what I have so often told you, not to be disheartened if Satan brings his attacks to bear specially upon that part of your nature that you desire to see most strengthened. The part of the wall of Jerusalem that Nehemiah was rebuilding was the one, of course, upon which his enemies concentrated their strength. When we are longing to be humble, or longing to be gentle, or longing to be unworldly, the

devil is sure to fill our minds with worldly, angry, and proud thoughts.

Remember, to be tempted is not to sin. If you have been tempted and have fallen, never rest until you have gone back under the shadow of the great rock to have the sin washed out in that Blood that cleanses from all sin.

Secondly, remember this: that you cannot be filled with one part of GOD the HOLY GHOST's influence and not with another. GOD is one. The HOLY SPIRIT either takes possession of us entirely or not at all. We cannot say, "O HOLY SPIRIT, give me a good temper, but I should like to keep my worldliness at the same time. O HOLY SPIRIT, give me much joy and peace; I like these fruits of the Spirit, happy Communion, and great peace; but, O HOLY SPIRIT, I want to keep the worldliness and the pride; I do not like humbling myself." GOD offers to us Himself. Receive Him, or reject Him, but never let the devil delude you with the idea that you can keep eating the blessed Bread at that Holy Table and drinking an equal proportion of poison for the remainder of the day, and yet become led and strengthened and made holy by GOD the Blessed Spirit.

Amid all the difficulties and all the falls and all the temptations, remember the text of our own S. Peter's Day, "The GOD of all grace"—not little portions such as we give at times to each other, but, all grace, for men and for women, for old and for young: the GOD of all grace, for all times and all circumstances—"the GOD of all grace, Who called you to His eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS, after that ye have suffered awhile, perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

In other words, remember what has been the burden of to-day's teaching, that GOD Almighty wills your sanctification, that GOD the HOLY GHOST lives in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.



PART III

POWER AND STRENGTH

“O merciful God, grant that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh.”



I

THE HEAVENLY VISION

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”

DEUT. vi. 4.

IT may be that some to whom I am now speaking can recall the impression which was made on their minds when they were first brought face to face with the grander manifestations of nature's glory. Up to that time our experience had been bounded by the limits of our own island home, with its sloping hills and fragrant gardens, the little brooklet gently murmuring through the waving cornfields, the quiet village church nestling in the shelter of some peaceful valley. There the vast panorama of the Alps lay outstretched before us, no sign of human existence visible, no sound of human life heard. The snow-capped mountains towered unto heaven, their summits shrouded with black clouds; sharp needles of rock seemed floating in mid-air half hidden by a veil of mist; white glaciers frowned on every side. The awful stillness was only broken by the crash of the avalanche, or the roar of the torrent, as it dashed from rock to rock, echoing far and wide through the butting crags.

As we thus stood alone in the presence of nature's God, the spirit was hushed, and we realized our own impotence. The words of the Hebrew psalm rose unbidden to our lips, “O LORD, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all.” “What

is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou regardest him ?”

So is it also with the doctrine which is this day brought before us in the services of the Church. To many, of course, such an idea must appear the veriest exaggeration. By them all the Festivals are regarded in much the same light. The mass of men neither know nor care what they mean, what they teach, what they involve. But if we try for one half hour to grasp the truth which is pressed on our attention on each recurring Trinity Sunday, the mind is almost overpowered by its mystery. We are able by our own experience to lay hold of the humbling teaching of Lent ; we can follow to some extent, at any rate, our Incarnate LORD from the manger of Bethlehem to the Cross of Calvary, or picture the resurrection glory of Easter and the final triumph of Ascension. But to-day we pass out of the region of experience into the very Presence-chamber of the Eternal One. We enter into the inmost shrine and contemplate in spirit the Triune and Infinite GOD : the Source of all power, the holy LORD GOD Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come : the first Cause of all Creation, Who in the depths of a past eternity existed in the mysterious solitude of His Divine essence, Who will exist for ever in the eternal future from everlasting to everlasting, GOD over all, blessed for evermore.

What is the nature of this Divine Being ? What does it involve, this doctrine of the Trinity in Unity ?

“Hear, O Israel : The LORD our GOD is one LORD.” There is none other GOD but One. This is what we mean by the Unity, yet side by side with these reiterated statements as to the oneness of GOD, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST are represented to us as so separate the one from the other, that a threefold personality can be clearly recognized. The SON, for instance,

promises to pray to the FATHER in order that, in answer to that intercession, the Comforter may be vouchsafed to His Church. The same LORD, when ascending from the Jordan stream after His Baptism, is acknowledged by the voice of the Eternal FATHER, "This is My beloved SON," while the HOLY GHOST appears like the form of a dove lighting upon Him. This is what we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine which, I need hardly remind you, is involved in the conclusion of Morning and Evening Prayer: "The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST."

How, then, are these truths to be reconciled? This is the question with which we are at present concerned. In attempting to answer it I have no intention to explain at length the articles of that confession of faith in which the doctrine is most fully defined. Still less do I wish to guide your thoughts through all the metaphysical subtleties by which Arians and Sabellians and Monophysites have confused the minds of their disciples.

Wellnigh every sentence in that ancient Creed which this day has been said in our hearing was written to assert some vital truth which had been openly attacked or virtually denied. Wellnigh every phrase, now almost obsolete, stands up like a moss-covered stone on the time-honoured battlefield, to mark the issue of a conflict of Christendom—to define the point beyond which no band of marauders has been allowed to pass into the heritage of the Church. We stoop down, we brush aside the dust of ages, we decipher the archaic inscription, and we see written on its every side, in different dialects, this one truth, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." "Canst thou by searching find out GOD?" "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come."

How far, then, may we go? How may we speak of GOD without contradicting that which GOD has revealed?

We may think of heaven and believe that in that world unseen there are these three Persons—the FATHER Who gave us a Saviour; the Saviour Who shed His Blood to redeem, and Who, as Man bearing our human nature, is seated at the right hand of the FATHER; the HOLY GHOST Whom JESUS promised to send into His Church: the Blessed Spirit Who shows us our sins and leads us to Him Who has borne those sins in His own Body on the tree. Of these three we may think; to these three, as separate the one from the other, we may pray, “O GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, GOD the HOLY GHOST.” Yet, on the other hand, when we are tempted to press this truth of the Trinity beyond the limits which the Bible has sanctioned, we must correct our error by remembering the fact of the Unity—by remembering, that is, that the three Persons are not distinct in their feelings and characters and wills as three individuals on earth are separated the one from the other. Thus, if any one speaks to us of the FATHER as only a just and holy GOD, stern and unbending, while every epithet of tenderness and love is reserved for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, or if he so concentrates his attention on the two Persons of the Trinity that the HOLY GHOST is either entirely forgotten or at any rate regarded as inferior to the FATHER and the SON, we shall at once be able to reply, “This must be wrong. ‘But the Godhead of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the FATHER is, such is the SON: and such is the HOLY GHOST. . . . In this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another.’” If the SON is Love, the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST are Love also; if the

FATHER is just and true, justice and truth must be the qualities alike of the SON and of the HOLY GHOST.

A principle like this (and may GOD forgive whatever is erring in it) will, I think, suffice to enable ordinary minds to reflect rightly on the nature of the Triune GOD. Those to whom He has granted more of ability and of leisure will delight to plunge deeper into the mystery. Only let all, whether learned or unlearned, remember that GOD is in heaven and that we are on earth ; that it is with the humble and contrite heart that the High and Holy One has promised to dwell, that whatever may be our natural intelligence in the world of sense and experience, our truest wisdom when we meditate on the nature of the Eternal GOD is to bow down with reverence, saying,

“Have mercy on us, GOD most High,
Who lift our hearts to Thee,
Have mercy on us worms of earth,
Most Holy Trinity.”

In the presence of this our GOD, let us kneel. Then let us rise to hear what the LORD our GOD will say to each of us assembled in His holy house this day.

This GOD is our GOD. If the artist has a right over his work ; if the parent has a right over his child ; if the sovereign has a right over his subjects ; then the Creator of all must have rights over the beings whom He has created. We simply belong to GOD. Wherever we are, we are His. There is no depth of thought or being into which we can retire and not meet Him, and no spot of ground of which He is not the owner : “Whither shall I go from Thy Presence, whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit ?”

If then this be the case, if we are thus absolutely in the power of GOD, surely it is of unspeakable importance that we should realize the character of that Being.

What then is the character of GOD as He Himself has been pleased to reveal it? I am not speaking to those who have satisfied themselves that the Bible is a mere collection of human fancies. I am not even asserting any special theory of inspiration. I simply address myself to those who in any real sense accept it as the Word of GOD, as the revelation of the FATHER and the SPIRIT. And I ask what is the character of GOD which is there revealed?

It is true that He is a GOD of love; ah, no words can describe the love of Him Who gave His SON to bleed on that Cross, no human tongue can do justice to that all-loving Redeemer Who for thirty-three years lived a life of sorrow to die at last the death of shame! GOD is a GOD of love, and in His love He offers freely to receive us, freely to blot out every stain of sin, freely to give pardon for the past and strength for the future. Only He bids us remember that He is essentially a holy GOD. "Holy, Holy, Holy" is a hymn which for all eternity will be chanted in His awful Presence-chamber. He reveals to us a law of the invisible kingdom which, though it perhaps may appear to us as inexplicable and difficult to accept as the deductions of a Faraday would appear to the untutored mind of a child, is yet as certain and will hereafter be as surely accepted by all intelligent creation as those principles of physical science which were once laughed to scorn, but are now recognized as true by the whole educated world.

GOD tells us that without holiness no one can enter into heaven, that the soul which will not yield itself to be transformed into His holy likeness must be left to the only place for which it is fit, that awful world "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Is not this a plain, unvarnished statement of the truth which GOD has revealed in Holy Scripture? I appeal

fearlessly to any man who will devote but a single week to its impartial investigation.

Does not God, I ask, prepare us for the very phenomena by which we are actually surrounded? Does He not rather tell us that because judgement is not executed speedily the hearts of men will be fully set in them to do evil? Does He not tell us that they will despise His forbearance, that their presumption will increase? They speak great swelling words of vanity, promising themselves liberty, though really the slaves of corruption, driving away every fear by incessant toil or ever-recurring excitement, persuading themselves that a man can serve two masters, that he can please God and the world, that the religious standard is raised too high, that the life of an amiable heathen will be accepted from those to whom the death of the Incarnate God has been revealed, and so forth.

Does He not tell us that in some cases the history of the Flood will be repeated? Men will laugh at the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." They will say in deed if not in word, "God is not"; at least, not the God of the Bible, not the God Who will bring every secret thought into judgement. Are we not told at the same time that in the midst of all this ungodliness God lives—longing for the salvation of His creatures, but unable, for reasons to be hereafter explained, to alter His eternal laws? Yes, God lives. The holy God, strong and patient, patient because He is strong. He lives. He has bent His bow, He has taken the arrow from the quiver, but He waits. He pleads with us. The careless words, the impure jests, He hears them all. The neglected progress, the Sacraments despised, the unopened Bible, the halting between two opinions, the Saviour's Blood trampled under foot for the sake of a world which passeth away—He sees it

all, and still He waits, still He pleads. The finger of life's time moves slowly on and on till the appointed hour has struck, and then the pen falls from the hand of the writer, and the lips of the orator are closed, and the soul—your soul, my brother—goes out, alone, alone, with the world for ever left behind, and before it is GOD: the GOD Whom you have forgotten, the GOD Whom you have denied for fear of being laughed at, the GOD before Whom the very angels bow low, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

Brethren, let us not treat our GOD in this way. He is very patient. But He is strong. He will keep silence till the appointed hour is come. He will keep silence while we mock Him by our indifference, rob Him of His joy by our idleness, dishonour Him by our cowardice, insult Him by our open and avowed wrongdoing. He will keep silence while, by our indecision, our trifling with conscience, we knock at heaven's door and challenge Him to come forth and prove His power. He will keep silence, but all the while GOD lives. All the while the finger of life's timepiece is moving.

May GOD help us this day to realize in some measure His power and His holiness, for CHRIST's sake.

II

RESISTANCE TO THE DEVIL

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

S. JAMES iv. 7.

THE Gospel brings before us a direct conflict between JESUS CHRIST and the kingdom of evil. The entire season of Lent reminds us of the mysterious assaults which, during these forty days, were endured by our Redeemer at the hands of that great adversary of GOD and man. The subject of resistance to the devil cannot be safely ignored by any wise soldier of the Cross.

Herein let us first grasp the fact that when we talk of the devil we mean no mere personification of the principles of evil, but a living, personal being. No theory as to the importation into Jewish theology of Babylonian superstition, no superficial explanation based upon the supposed adaptation of our LORD'S words to the popular ideas of the age in which He lived, will hold its ground when brought into the clear light of the plain statements which can be found with the help of a concordance by any student of Holy Scripture under these words, “Satan,” “the devil,” “the prince of this world,” and the like.

The origin, indeed, of Satan is shrouded in mystery. So also is the reason why the Almighty GOD does not use His Omnipotence, and stretch forth the right hand

of His Majesty at once, and drive Satan for ever out of the world which He has created. These are questions which will only be answered in that day when every veil will be uplifted, and we shall know, as we are now known of GOD ; when, in its deepest meaning the command of to-day's Epistle¹ will be addressed to GOD's elect, "Awake, awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light."

Meanwhile, this fact has been plainly written for us by GOD the HOLY GHOST in the inspired volume to which I have referred you for this meditation.

Besides the inborn tendencies to evil with which we have to struggle ; besides the force of outward circumstances, the evil men and the evil influences by which our onward progress is retarded, we are told that there lives behind the veil in that invisible kingdom a leader of the powers of darkness, beneath whose banner are arrayed those principalities and powers with whom the regenerate child of GOD must wrestle (like the ancient chief against the entwining serpents) until the victory is won, and he is borne by angels out of the conflict into the rest of Paradise. So mighty is the presence of Satan, that the full knowledge of his force was hidden from the sons of Israel, lest, like the demon-worshippers by whom they were surrounded, they might be seduced into the idolatrous deprecation of his wrath, lest they might be frightened into praying the devil to have mercy upon them. So powerless also is unaided man to conquer this relentless foe, that the all-merciful GOD kept for long from His faint-hearted children the full revelation of that overpowering kingdom of evil, lest in their weakness they should be driven to despair. It was only when the Stronger—the Stronger than the strong man—the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, had become

¹ Third Sunday in Lent.

Incarnate : it was only after CHRIST was born in Bethlehem that the world was allowed to gaze, as it were, upon the outline of that kingdom of the power of the air, and even now the lineaments of that dread form are hidden to a large extent from our gaze. GOD help us to stand firm and to fight the good fight to the end ! Never shall we know in all its terrible fullness what is meant by the personality of Satan, till the day dawn in which with the ransomed ones we shall be standing on the eternal shore, and shall gaze with a chastened exultation upon the King by Whom he has been conquered, and shall mark the last struggles of our foe as he is cast by GOD for ever into that lake of fire. On that glorious morning (to use the words of the Apocalyptic vision) we shall sing the song—have you ever understood what those words mean?—sing the song of Moses the servant of GOD as well as the song of the Lamb. We shall sing, that is, that triumphant anthem, “Sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously : the horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea,” the devil and his angels hath He thrown into the lake of fire.

Meanwhile, by all and every means, by the history of those who have fallen, by the trumpet call of direct warning, the Almighty Spirit beseeches us not to undervalue our foe, but to recognize the intensity of his power, the relentless character of his assaults. “My brethren,” saith the Apostle, writing under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, “be sober,” that is, be temperate ; keep your bodies, keep this world, and all that belongs to it, under ; live a self-restrained life. “Be sober” ; be on your guard ; “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour : whom resist.” My brethren, be strong in the

LORD; put on the armour of GOD; stand against the wiles of the devil; for you are wrestling, not merely "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness" encompassing you on every side. Be sober; "resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Yes! Satan can enlist in his service all the desires of our lower nature. He can employ as his agents our dearest friends. He can make use of the holiest saints to tempt us. A man like the Apostle Peter could love the LORD JESUS CHRIST with all the intensity of his nature and yet could unexpectedly be so employed as an agent of the devil as to bring down upon his head that stern rebuke from the Incarnate GOD, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"—Apostle though thou art, I see thee used by the spirit of evil; speaking smooth things to Me, telling Me to throw off the Cross and not to die—get thee behind Me, Satan, thou art a stumbling block to Me; the advice that thou art giving is the advice of the world and of the lower nature. Get thee behind Me; "thou savourest not the things that be of GOD, but the things that be of men."

But more than that, Satan is able to work directly upon the highest part of our being—our spirit. You have felt it again and again. You have known how, when you have knelt in prayer, perhaps when you have been receiving the very Bread and Wine at that Holy Table, there has come suddenly into your heart such overpowering thoughts of evil that it has seemed almost like blasphemy to remain on your knees or to communicate at the altar of your GOD. You have found yourselves for weeks possessed by temptations of the most blinding, all-mastering force; sometimes of the grosser kind; sometimes coming in the form of despair,

unbelief, murmuring; at other times assailing you with bitter feelings against those whom you ought to love. In all these and numberless other ways, Satan, a spirit, comes direct into the spirit of a man, and lays hold of him and perplexes him and binds him, and (unless the man resist the devil) will finally drag him, as he dragged Judas, into the depths of a spiritual suicide.

Thus, this mighty enemy was able to enter into Paradise, and by the still waters of God's fair creation to accomplish his work of destruction, and to desolate the garden which God had pronounced to be "very good." He was able to enter into Gethsemane, and to confront the Second Adam; so that, though conquered at last, he did not leave Him till he had wrung out of His Heart that cry of agony, "O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Not till that Body had been wrung with the Agony and the bloody Sweat, could Satan depart, and the angels come down to minister to the suffering, tempted, agonized Champion of humanity. On the threshold of every church—we are told, after each sermon—he marshals a mighty phalanx of spiritual beings. Like the fowls of the air on the scattered seeds in the wide fields of God's creation, those invisible foes come down. Saints and sinners alike are employed to work the work of ruin; lest (as our LORD describes it) one word that has been preached should sink so deep into the heart that the man might believe and be saved. Those are the words of JESUS CHRIST. Immediately, He says, after the sermon has been preached, cometh the devil, and incessantly—in the porch, at luncheon, in the afternoon gossip—plucks away the seeds, because he hates you, because he hates GOD and CHRIST and the kingdom of CHRIST, and longs to drag you down into the perdition in which he himself has been involved. He found for Noah

the fruit of the vine, and for Lot the riches of Sodom ; he came to Achan with the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment ; for David there was the beauty of Bathsheba ; for Judas the thirty pieces of silver ; for Demas the enjoyments of this present life ; and for Herod, the ambitious man, there was the crowd of flatterers to say as they echoed his every sentence, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."

My brethren, we are walking, as it were, every hour of our life, on the very edge of a precipice. And down below, on that seashore where the waves are breaking with their sullen roar, you may watch the whitening bones of men and women who trod once the selfsame path that you are treading, who once were called (as you have been called) to be members of CHRIST and children of the Everlasting FATHER, and heirs of the eternal inheritance, who once believed, once rejoiced in CHRIST, once bid fair to fight the fight, and to win the crown. They yielded to the invisible spirits of evil and were slain. Look at them, those bones on that seashore, and "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Sometimes, like a lion, he crouches under the trees, seducing you by his very calmness, making you say "All is peace." The quiet air scarce sounds around you, and the birds sing sweetly in your ears, and you are conscious of much spiritual feeling without the energy to put the feeling into practice ; all is calm and still around, and you feel as if the foe were vanquished and the world trodden beneath your feet. And then, all unexpectedly, he bursts forth from his lair with a favourite temptation, the pride, the vanity, the lusts of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of

life, and devours the soul for which the SON of GOD was crucified!

And at another time he tries to overpower us by weeks of darkness, by the loud roar, as if he were indeed the king of this lower earth, as if GOD Himself were powerless to enable His soldiers to master the subtle temptations with which he was able to ply every degenerate child of Adam. In all and sundry ways he goeth about—oh, GOD enable you to lay hold of this—he goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Brethren, beloved in CHRIST, resist him or you die.

Do you ask, How shall I resist him? The Bible, if you study it, will give you the answer.

1. We must be vigilant. “Watch and pray.”

“‘Christian! seek not yet repose,
Hear thy guardian angel say;
‘Thou art in the midst of foes;
Watch and pray.’

Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours;
Watch and pray.

Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day”—

Watch when the old nature rises in any form. You know the way, if you have ever examined yourself, in which it is most likely to arise. Watch when you are in the society of those who care not for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, even though you are obliged by duty thus to enter into temptation. Watch when Satan whispers, “One Communion! it matters not! one prayer put aside, one Bible-reading neglected, one little compliance with evil.” But, my brethren, by one act of silence

when God bids you speak ; by one smile over your face when the words of evil are spoken and your consent is given by that approving look, by one relaxing of the warfare, you may sow the seed (my brethren, I am speaking that which will be re-echoed by many hearts in this church), of an after sorrow of the bitterest kind, even if, through God's mercy, you are finally saved. Watch, if you would resist the devil.

We must watch humbly—in all humility. The moment a self-satisfied feeling is arising, the moment we look with self-complacency upon anything, whatever it be—ourselves, our children, our success in life, the manner in which God's work has been done—the moment the proud thought arises, look upon it as the pioneer of Satan. He goeth before to fill up the valleys that ought to be kept low so that the soul in them may lie humbly before its God. He goeth before, by those proud, conceited, self-satisfied thoughts, to prepare the way ; that Satan, the great adversary, may march into the secret corners of that heart unchecked. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Next, if we would fight, we must fight in JESUS CHRIST, realizing our acceptance in Him, laying firm hold of the blessed fact that we have been baptized into the remission of sins : that He, like the great scapegoat, has carried away our iniquities into that far-off desert land, so that we can look up to God, without any barrier between us, as reconciled children in JESUS CHRIST. We must fight as accepted in CHRIST, and with confidence in the power of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. We must dwell upon CHRIST Who suffered—mark the word in your Bible—"He suffered, being tempted." CHRIST "was in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin." We must think of that glorious King going before us on the white horse, conquering and to conquer. Yes, washed in His Blood, and clothed with the white robe of His righteousness, we must go forth. That poor negro woman uttered unconsciously a deep truth of the invisible kingdom, when she was asked how she dared to confront Satan. Her answer was this, "I go behind JESUS CHRIST"—behind Him, behind the conquering King going before to deliver His people from the power of evil. And that thought will give us calmness and sure confidence of victory.

The Gospel tells us that the Stronger than the strong man has now entered into the conflict, and has spoiled the goods of our enemy. There is something cheering when we are worn out with fighting against the petty sins of our lower nature, when we have almost come to hate our friends because they have tempted us to forget our God and fall short of the high standard which He has ever put before us—there is something, I say, invigorating to any man with the spirit of a soldier breathing in his heart, to know that he is not fighting against himself, still less fighting merely against the friends who tempt him (co-heirs with himself of the same glorious immortality), but that he is called to a great conflict which the SON of GOD has inaugurated. He is being led on against a foe worthy of his prowess, that he is entering the lists which have been filled by saints and martyrs and confessors; if he has principalities and powers against him, he has the saints of GOD in all their blessed fellowship of Paradise around him. He has GOD the HOLY GHOST living in him. He has CHRIST at the right hand of the FATHER interceding for the weakest soldier in the battle. He has GOD, the Everlasting LORD, looking down and knowing the very hour when

the armour shall be laid aside, when the hard, hard fight shall be ended, and those words be spoken, which would be cheaply purchased by a lifetime of suffering: "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast fought a good fight, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD!"

III

THE GOOD FIGHT

“Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”—EPH. v. 17.

WE have been baptized, my brethren, one by one, into a deadly warfare, a warfare that has to be waged with a relentless foe, a warfare from which there is no discharge so long as life endures. “We sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that . . . he shall . . . fight”—fight manfully—“under [CHRIST’S] banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue CHRIST’S faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.”

But although the warfare is thus deadly, we are marching onward to an assured victory. Yes! if only we will hold fast by our GOD, and watch and pray and fight the good fight, the triumph has been promised on the word of the Everlasting GOD, Who never deceives the weakest or the most helpless of His creatures. We may indeed be compelled, as every true Christian is obliged at times, to enter into the experience of our Divine Master. We may have to realize those times of utter darkness when we seem almost weighed down by physical infirmity and mental anxiety and spiritual depression: those Calvary hours in which we feel like some traveller in an unknown region when the mists of night are gathering around him and the wild breeze sounds harshly in his ears. We stand, as it were, in the midst of some mountain torrent or the dried-up bed of

a great river, and heart and flesh are failing, and we seem almost paralysed by our fears, and our very limbs refuse to bear us out of the dangers by which we are encompassed. And we listen to the fountains of the deep waters broken up in the far distance, and we stand paralysed as we hear the sullen roar of those great waters flowing onward surely to overwhelm us. And nothing seems left for us but to lie down till the great waters have overwhelmed us and we have utterly perished. But, even then, out of the very depths of our desolation, we can thank GOD (like the Apostles singing hymns of praise in their dungeon) because we know that our GOD has promised that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a banner against him.

We may be wellnigh disheartened, as we look back on bygone struggles, as we remember how (like the poor demoniac in the Gospel) we have bound ourselves with fetters of earthly resolutions, with the chains of our human resolves, and the chains have been plucked asunder, and the fetters have been broken in pieces, and we have found that no earthly strength could tame that devil that was ruling within us. And we feel, with almost a shudder, that if it had not been for the goodness of our GOD, we should have been carried down the steep places, like the swine, into the depths of an utter degradation forgetting that our bodies have ever been made the temples of the Living GOD. But yet, even in the midst of the gathering gloom, we hold fast and sing our hymn, "Be joyful in the LORD, all ye lands," with thanksgiving, "Praise the LORD, O my soul," because we know that the morning shall break and the darkness shall flee away; and, like that poor devil-ridden man on the shores of that crystal sea, we shall be found clothed with the white robe of our Redeemer's righteousness, with all the per-

plexities of the earthly entanglements gone for ever, the spirits of evil overwhelmed by the mighty waters of God's all-conquering might: resting there as the mists flee away in the quiet morning, clothed and in our right mind at the feet of JESUS CHRIST.

So, as we hear the war-cry, "Watch and pray," we gird on our armour and we look our foe in the face, and we say, like David of old, Thou, O Satan, art coming against me with the spear and with the sword and with the shield, but I come to thee in the Name of the Living GOD, the GOD of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied.

Only, my brethren, if the battle is to end in victory, we must not be unwise, but we must understand what the will of the LORD is.

It is of vital importance that we should understand that no temptation can take hold of us save that which is common to man. We must lay hold of the fact that it is the will of GOD that we should be tempted—for our sanctification, that we may be raised to higher heights of holy communion than those which without his assaults we should ever have attained. We must understand also that there is no sin in being tempted; that the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, though without sin, was tempted in all things even as you and I are tempted; that—passing through that experience which I have described—He suffered, being tempted. We come to a higher understanding of God's will, by recognizing the fact that temptation is the very sign of our sonship, the very pledge and assurance to us that we are true members of the mystical Body, that we are united to JESUS CHRIST, that we are walking in the selfsame road in which the Champion of humanity has gone before.

The mere intellectual understanding of those rudi-

ments of theology is an unspeakable power when we are called to confront the great enemy who "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We must have a mental apprehension that it may be the will of GOD for us to be tempted every day of our lives, that there is no sin in being tempted, even if it lasts for years, that we are the more conformed to the likeness of CHRIST in proportion as we are assailed by the manifold assaults of the devil.

Then, secondly, we must also try to understand what the will of the LORD is as regards the method of the campaign. Everything depends upon the mode of warfare that we adopt, and the weapons which we use in this lifelong struggle with this relentless adversary. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. The resolutions of a strong will are all very well in their way. Systems by which Christian men have trained themselves to wage the good warfare are excellent as guides and helps in the conflict. But we can never make steady progress year after year, we can never carry the warfare into the enemy's country so as to come back laden with the spoils of our triumph, unless we fight not with earthly and carnal but with spiritual weapons; unless we take the Bible for our guide, and (fighting as we do with an invisible enemy) use that mode of warfare which the invisible God, Who is looking Satan in the face, has prescribed for us.

Let me briefly remind you then of some particulars in this warfare against Satan.

First, it is of vital importance that we abide in GOD. GOD has put us into CHRIST, hidden us, as it were, in JESUS CHRIST, encompassed us with all the omnipotence of the Everlasting Trinity. If we wish to rise up with any power against Satan, we must abide in GOD.

I believe (we may say to ourselves) in GOD the

FATHER, however much I am tempted. I thank GOD that I am His own child, that He has promised that as a mother comforts her babe so will He strengthen me, that He has promised never to leave me, never to forsake me. I must abide in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. I believe in JESUS CHRIST. I know that He liveth to pray for me. I know that as an elder brother He can enter into my every difficulty, having Himself passed through it all in the days of His earthly warfare. I believe that He is alive, and that in a mysterious manner He is ever drawing me to His Table to feed my soul with His own blessed Body and Blood, that from those continual Communion I may return invigorated for the conflict. I believe in GOD the HOLY GHOST. I know on the Word of GOD that in my inmost being the Living GOD is dwelling, that my body is described in the Bible as the temple of the HOLY GHOST, that He Who is fighting in me is greater than all the principalities and powers by which I am surrounded; and therefore while the struggle lasts, be it for days or for weeks or for life, I will go on my way singing "Glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST."

And, again, our GOD knows that the invisible power of the Blessed Trinity oft-times seems so far away from us that we, with our weak faith, are powerless to lay hold of the strength which this knowledge is intended to convey. Therefore it is the will of our GOD to support and strengthen us by human companionship and the consciousness of human sympathy. The man who goes against a relentless foe in his own solitary individuality is sure to be destroyed. The victory is won by the army going up shoulder to shoulder, heart beating true to heart, each man bound to his fellow-men in the marvellous union of a perfect organization. And so the Creed of the Living GOD has nerved the soldiers of the

Cross for nineteen hundred years, not merely by belief in the FATHER, and the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, but by belief in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints.

We have not merely to abide in GOD, but to abide in the Body, to realize that we are members of that mystical communion; that round us is the great cloud of witnesses, the blessed ones in Paradise, watching us as we lay aside every weight and do good warfare for CHRIST our King. We have to remember that every Sunday millions of prayers go up to heaven for each individual soldier, that thousands in Europe and Asia and Africa and America communicate at the one Altar of the LORD and pray for us, that GOD will give to us the strength that we may need for the battle of the day, for the conflict of the hour. We have to stay ourselves on the memory of thousands who have fought the good fight, who were tried as we are tried, tempted as we are tempted, and now have entered into rest.

And then, we must be calm. In earthly soldiery a man who loses his head is of little use. We must look our adversary in the face. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air," with my hands up striking out wildly, but I watch my opportunity. Realize by study of the Bible the nature of the foe, and be wise: plant your blows where they will tell.

Let me illustrate what I mean. It is an immense help in the spiritual warfare, at some quiet time, when temptation is not pressing very heavily upon us, to remind ourselves (by reading some of the texts in the Bible on the subject) that the devil is alive, and then to speak to him as it were to a living enemy:—"Whenever you bring against me that deadly temptation, I shall say 'Glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST'; I shall praise GOD, and as long as you

continue to tempt me, whatever I am doing, at intervals, I shall say that hymn of praise. Therefore, Satan, if you like to tempt me a thousand times this year, GOD Whom you hate, and the blessed angels with whom you once did deadly warfare, shall hear ascending from my struggling spirit a thousand hymns of praise."

Or, if we have not courage for that, most of us have some friend whom we dearly love, whom we know to be in some deadly peril. Look Satan in the face and tell him that whenever he assaults that one with some deadly temptation, you will lift up your heart and pray for that husband, that wife, that child. Therefore say unto him, "O thou enemy of my soul, thou mayest try me if thou wilt, thou mayest break my heart and crush the happiness out of my life by thy temptations, but thou knowest that my God hears prayer, and so a thousand prayers will ascend this year for that soul that is now entangled in thy bondage."

Or, if we feel that this is too much for us, then (as our LORD did) let us tell Satan that there shall be a text of Scripture said over when the assault is most fearfully upon us.

Or, if even that be more than we have courage to do, at least as long as the temptation continues, say calmly: "LORD, help me; LORD, I know that Thou art fighting for me; stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty and be my defence against my enemy." So, calmly, as in the sight of a GOD Who loves you, fight, and Satan will leave you. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

More than that. Limit your fighting to the day—day by day. One of the most subtle of Satan's temptations is that whereby he brings before us the whole conflict of the life. "How can you," he says, "endure years of this fighting? How can you bear to go on

with this relentless foe till death?" Throw it back in his face. Say to him, "My GOD has taught me only to pray for the day. Day by day that Table is spread ready to give me new strength when my heart and my flesh fail. Day by day I have my Bible to read, and my GOD to listen to my prayer. The manna that I gather for to-day will be found utterly useless when the time of assault is upon me to-morrow. Sufficient for the day is the battle and the evil thereof. I will not ask manna for the morrow, I only fight for to-day."

So, my brethren, I have tried to teach you the alphabet of the spiritual warfare; and I have linked the teaching with the first four letters of the alphabet, so that a child may carry away the knowledge of this sermon for the lifelong struggle: Abide, Body of CHRIST, Calmness, Day by day. It is the literal A B C D of Christianity.

And, lastly, we must be earnest. My brethren, if we are to be lost, it is not because GOD will not help us, not because the Almighty is not on our side, but because of that random living. We may go on struggling for a few hours or a few weeks, but then we relax our energy, and our poor are not visited, or our prayers are not said, or we prepare not for Communion, or we enter into some deadly temptation by going unnecessarily into the society of those by whom we are always dragged down to a lower level. We go away for a few weeks, and then we return to be galvanized by some earnest sermon or aroused by some sudden death. My brethren, unless the whole of religion is one mighty sham—unless the great GOD has deceived us when He has told us of the principalities and powers around us—all the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye and the pride of life, and the innocent enjoyments and harmless companionships of our youth, are all being used by Satan to drag us down into that abyss of ruin in which himself and the first

enemies of mankind have been engulfed. If GOD is true (and you know He is true!), and He has taught you that this great enemy robbed Adam of Paradise, and wounded Noah and Lot, and made David into an adulterer ("sweet psalmist of Israel" though he were), and dragged down S. Peter till with cursing and with swearing he denied the LORD Whom he loved—if GOD has told us that he is going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour—oh, men and brethren, will you not be wise and understand what the will of the LORD is? It is that you should watch and pray, guarding against the slightest approach of evil, going down on your knees with humble confession to GOD the moment you have yielded, even for an instant, to an impure thought or a proud feeling, or to an unkind accusation brought by the spirit of evil against one of your fellow-creatures. My brethren, will you not be on your guard when Satan comes with that old temptation, tempting you to procrastinate? To the young man he says, "After you have had the pleasure of youth you can be earnest"; to the man all absorbed in business, "After you have made your fortune, then you can think of your soul"; to the man resting after the battle of life, "There is time enough": leave it to a sick bed, and then the whole strength is prostrate and the actual power of the mind to grasp the will of GOD is gone! My brethren, the whole Bible teaches us (and the experience of every Christian will teach you the same) that Satan longs to delude us, that he is always trying to soothe the conscience with some deadly opiate, telling us we are better than other people or no worse than our neighbours, telling us that all will be right at last, telling us that GOD is too good to punish, too merciful to remind us hereafter of the sins we have committed. Oh! in the Name of that GOD Who sends you the message this Lent, I pray you to be earnest.

For, brethren, let me speak plainly : there are many in this church who have said to myself that they know something of the love of GOD, who have told me with their own lips that GOD has washed away their sin ; yet who, unless I am mistaken, are being dragged down again by a relentless foe. In the Name of that GOD Who alone can give power to any human words, I beseech you, be sober, be watchful ; you are fighting not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Be not unwise, but understand—before the day of grace is over and the door of mercy shut for ever against you—oh, understand what the will of your GOD is !

IV

AHAB THE WORLDLING

“ Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? ”—I KINGS xxii. 39.

IF, my brethren, Ahab had lived in an age after the art of printing had been discovered, we can easily imagine the kind of article which would have been written upon him in the columns of the daily Press. “ A great man ”—we seem to read it as I speak—“ a great man has fallen in Israel. He has passed away at Ramoth-gilead after strenuously avenging the honour of his country against our national foes. . . . The patriot who has departed from us was a remarkable man. He was distinguished by great taste and much self-culture. His knowledge of architecture was such that he could have earned by it an honourable living, if circumstances had obliged him to make it his profession. Few travellers can fail to have been struck by that summer residence of his, standing on that gentle eminence commanding that beautiful plain, with the gently flowing stream, the striking watch-tower that commands the eastern entrance to Jezreel, the apartments of the queen overlooking the gate. His ivory house, made with the ivory brought from India, will attest to succeeding generations the taste of the departed monarch. Nor was Ahab merely a patriot. He was a man who, in spite of his high position, was a noble

patron of religion. We say it with reverence, but surely it must have been gratifying to the Almighty to have seen a man with such a position not ashamed of acknowledging the GOD of his fathers. Far be it from us to lift the curtain that veils the sacred intercourse of every soul with its Creator, but we may recall to our readers that striking scene, when he who died this morning was seen at the head of his people, humbling himself, fasting, acknowledging the power of GOD, and receiving from JEHOVAH a special mark of His favour. The cities that he built, and the ivory house that he made, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ?”

Such, my brethren, would have been the world's judgement upon Ahab. And it was perfectly true. There is not a letter of exaggeration in the “newspaper report” which I have ventured to read to you. And yet, though that was perfectly true, the biographies of the Bible have this striking advantage over all other biographies : we have there the judgement of One to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, from Whom no secrets are hid. We have there the judgement of the Being Whose eye does not stop, as man's eye, when the corpse is laid in the costly tomb, but looks beyond the great gulf and marks the entrance of the spirit into the world unseen. And the judgement of JEHOVAH upon this Ahab was this : “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” “There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness”—not in the sight of man, for his was a spotless life, saving one fall—“to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD.”

My brethren, GOD has been pleased in this parish to give much individual Christian life. There are many

here, thank GOD, for whom we can only praise His holy Name, to Whom their redemption, their forgiveness, their sanctification are to be ascribed. But unless I am utterly mistaken, this life of Ahab is the representation of our national life, our parochial life, our life as a congregation. So, God helping me, for this Lent, for the Sundays that yet remain, I ask you to consider quietly why it was that the world's judgement and God's judgement, both true, were yet apparently so opposed the one to the other ; how it was possible for this man, so full of beautiful taste, so self-cultured, so great a patriot, such a friend to religion, such a companion to Elijah the prophet, to be handed down to posterity as the man whom God's servants regarded as the most repulsive of all the wicked sovereigns of a degraded race.

And those of you who in former days have helped the preacher by your prayers, will not be wanting now, that God in His boundless mercy may be pleased before the quiet days of Holy Week, to grant unto us as a congregation something, at any rate, resembling the spirit of Lent. May we turn to God with real repentance, a true humiliation, a resolution, God helping us, to leave the Ahab-life behind, and to arise on that Easter Morn, either here or in Paradise, to walk in newness of life.

I would observe, then, first, that Ahab had received from God great blessings.

It was a distinct blessing to have that love of nature, that power of culture, that freedom. Ahab had his own family life ; he had the blessing of a wife, who watched his every movement, saw in a moment when the appetite was failing, and the face of her lord was saddened : "What aileth my lord ? Why dost thou refuse to eat thy food ?" All these were gifts from God.

And you and I, brethren, though our position in many respects is so very different, have yet countless

blessings for which to thank Almighty God. There are few here who have not opportunities some time in the year of improving their taste by all that refines and ennobles—music, art, everything which in this great metropolis is freely offered to us. On purpose I am not speaking to-day of religious privileges, but all these opportunities are freely given us by God.

We are bound to thank God for it. As the LORD said by Moses to Israel of old, it is GOD that has given you the power to get wealth. It is GOD that has given you that happy home. It is GOD Who has given you the love for nature, the care for your property, the patriotism that nerves you to self-denial in behalf of the old fatherland. God has given us all this, whatever it be—health, strength, home, children, money, influence, popularity—all has come from God. And if there be one thing more repulsive than another to any right-thinking man, it is the miserable phraseology which speaks of sorrow and trouble and trial and disappointment and bereavement as God's will, but which forgets to ascribe equally to the same hand of the Eternal FATHER the happiness and the peace and the wealth and the joy so freely showered on our path. "It is God's will," a man says, "and I must bear the sorrow. I am a lucky man; it was a good stroke; I must be thankful to myself for this and for this, the mercy, that I have received."

Let that first be clearly stated. Let us bid farewell to the grudging, unthankful spirit which speaks with bated breath of the earthly blessings which we have received from the kind hand of a loving Providence.

But, secondly, I would observe, and you will see it more clearly if you follow the history with me further on, that we have in Ahab an instance of that danger against which the Bishop of the Diocese warned us when

he opened this church, restored in all its beauty. Some of you may remember the text that at first seemed to cast such a chill upon our spirit, rejoicing as we were in the beautiful church which our GOD has given us. I at least felt disappointed when the text was given. "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My Name, saith the LORD of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings : yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." This sad state of things would have been reversed if Ahab had only offered up his entire being to GOD ; if he had only brought that human will into subjection to the Divine will, an incalculable blessing would have come to himself, his country, and his posterity ; but the very things that GOD gave in love to be to him for his wealth were (as the Psalmist says) made by his own withdrawing of his will from GOD into an occasion of falling. The wealth, the freedom, the happy home, everything that GOD had given, became a curse after the man had withdrawn himself from hearty surrender to the LORD Omnipotent. For GOD must reign in heaven and in earth. No other voice can be heard than this : "The LORD GOD Omnipotent reigneth." Every knee must, sooner or later, bow before Him.

It was Ahab's love of nature and perfect taste, undisciplined by real religion, which ended in the murder of Naboth. He could not bear to look out of his window in the morning when he rose, and to see that little bit of ground spoiling the beauty of his estate. Yes, he was undisciplined, and at last practically he murdered Naboth to obtain the garden of herbs. This power to do what he liked, his absolute freedom, made him choose, not the woman who would have lifted him up to heaven, but the queen who dragged him down to hell. He went out and married whom he liked ; and

the first that he loved was one whom God had forbidden him to marry, one who belonged to a race of idolators with whom Israel was to have no contact. So it would be easy to follow out the thought, and to show that every blessing which God had given to Ahab was, through his want of hearty surrender, turned into the means of his destruction.

Therefore, my brethren, it is that the picture contained in these few chapters of the First Book of Kings is so fraught with solemn meaning to us. For is it not true—I speak to myself, I speak to you—that the very blessings which we enjoy are likely to be to us the occasion of falling? Is it not true? Was not our LORD right in saying that if we had this world's goods, we were in danger of the woe coming upon us of those who were satisfied and had received their consolation? “Woe unto you! for ye have received your consolation.”

Look at it for a moment quietly. Let me speak, GOD helping me, as little as possible with any impassioned utterance, but calmly. Is it not true what the Bible says that CHRIST will at the last day judge us according to our opportunities? Is it or is it not true that the greater the responsibility the larger the account which will have to be rendered: ten talents, five talents, one talent? Is it not true that freedom, education, culture, sufficient food, and the like, are responsibilities? Is it not true that there is scarcely a human being in this church who cannot influence another on matters connected with this world? Can you not, then, imagine that one who has received the greatest amount of blessing, having thereby received the largest amount of responsibility, may at the last day find that through want of living surrender to GOD he has sunk into the condition of this miserable sovereign of Israel?

Secondly, is it not natural that those of us who have no peculiar trouble or difficulty in this world are more likely to be bound to earth than those who find this world indeed a vale of tears? Is it not natural to suppose that if we are popular, if we are prosperous, if we have nice refined tastes, if we have received from our parents a gentle, amiable nature, if things on the whole go well with us : is it or is it not likely that we should be more inclined to remain on earth than those who have found this world a trial and a discomfort? And what is the only sign in the Bible of having the spirit for which God is longing, the spirit which the whole of God's education is intended to develop? Is it or is it not the spirit of those who live as strangers and pilgrims, those who, like Israel of old, eat their Passover meal with their loins girded and their staff in their hands, waiting for the order to march to the other world?

Contrast two cases, and you will at once, without further explanation, see what I mean. Some fifteen years ago, one who has long since departed out of this life, but who then occupied the leading position (I might say) in London, second, I think, only to Royalty, said to me this: "Do you not see, Mr. Wilkinson, how almost impossible it is for me really to wish to go out of this world, for I have everything to make me love this world?" Now contrast that with another man, who spoke to me some ten years ago. It was late in the evening, in my old parish of Windmill Street, and I had been preparing him for Confirmation. And as I looked at his face, I saw the eye all glazed, and evidently the man was not attending to what I said. And I asked, "Are you ill?" He replied, "No, sir, I am not ill." I said, "What is the matter?" He answered, "I only feel a little faint, sir; for I have been about yesterday and to-day to see about work, and I have only had a cup of

tea yesterday and to-day, and I feel a bit faint." Now contrast those two. Who was more likely to love earthly things, who was more likely to long for heaven and the songs of angels, and the place where a man hungers no more, neither thirsts any more, and where GOD wipes away all tears from the eyes? What binds us to earth?

And, lastly, I would ask you to consider whether the position that you and I occupy is or is not somewhat unfavourable to developing that spirit of obedience and self-restraint which is characteristic of the Christian life? Look at it only for an instant. Now I ask you, brethren, to take this as an illustration. I beseech you, as you value your own salvation, do not when you gossip in the porch say, "Oh, it was a sermon about keeping Lent." It is not.

It is a sermon that any Christian evangelist, who neither believed in a Church or in Baptism or any Sacrament that CHRIST has ordained, would preach if he were a true man, however benighted he might be with respect to other saving truths. Take these forty days as an illustration. If a Dissenter does not keep the rule of the body to which he belongs, his class leader comes down upon him. If a Romanist desires to come to Communion at Easter, he must make a confession before Easter Day. Both extremes are under discipline. Here—do we say?—in the Church of England, we are absolutely free. Thank GOD for it! We are perfectly free to have as much society as ever we like, to go where we like, do what we like, marry whom we like, live as we like; and nobody has the right to say a word to us. We can get up in the morning when we like; we can spend a lifetime without any active self-sacrifice; we need never speak to another man about JESUS CHRIST; we have no account to give of ourselves to anybody. For nineteen hundred

years Christians may have found the good of shutting themselves off from the world for these forty days. Our "enlightened" judgement (I am not now condemning it, simply stating a fact) says, "Nonsense, ecclesiastical tyranny; rubbish, unworthy of the nineteenth century!" And the natural man rises up, and he does rather more (instead of less) in Lent, to show that he is not bound by any such tyranny.

Well, here are three facts: the responsibility of blessing, the tendency of earthly blessing to bind to earth, and the danger of unrestrained liberty. Brethren, what are you and I to do—for the danger is greater perhaps for me than those to whom I speak—about the things of this world?

First, to acknowledge on our knees the danger.

Secondly, to thank GOD whenever our will is thwarted, whenever we have a chance of giving up anything we like for the comfort of others; to thank GOD when sorrow comes, though our heart breaks; to thank GOD when by bereavement He opens heaven to us, and lifts us up above this world with all its cares, be they religious or be they secular; to recognize the danger and thankfully to take every opportunity for self-denial; to correct the tendency to please ourselves by all and every possible means.

And, thirdly, to help the poor indeed, but to pray most for the rich: for those, whether priests or people, who are getting on comfortably, who have no particular reproach cast upon them, who are in no peculiar danger of being brought under the law of the land; those who, like Ahab, are cultured, refined, perfect, except that in the sight of GOD they are an abomination, because they have not given up their will to Him; because, through the want of surrender to heaven, they are turning all the priceless blessings that their FATHER

has showered upon them into the means of their eternal destruction :

“When the world around is smiling,
In the time of wealth and ease,
Earthly joys our hearts beguiling,
In the day of health and peace,
By Thy mercy,
O deliver us, good LORD.”

V

A REPROBATE MIND

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”—ROM. i. 21, 28.

WE have seen, my brethren, that King Ahab was a man highly favoured of GOD. JEHOVAH bestowed upon him three great spiritual blessings, besides all the natural blessings that he received, and which we considered last Sunday. JEHOVAH, I say, bestowed upon him three great spiritual blessings:—

Firstly, the Almighty revealed Himself to Ahab. He revealed Himself in the very way that was most likely to lay hold of his will. He revealed Himself to Ahab as a soldier, under the aspect of the GOD of battles. He led him on to victory, as we are told in 1 Kings xx.

Secondly, He revealed Himself by the instrumentality of a man more likely to influence the sovereign of Israel perhaps than any of the ancient prophets. GOD saw that Ahab was a man naturally inclined to depend upon others, and therefore He gave him the strongest of the company of the prophets to lead him, the dauntless Elijah.

Thirdly, GOD knew Ahab to be a man to whose nature love would speak with a very faltering voice. Ahab was essentially a selfish man; and therefore the

Almighty GOD appealed to his selfishness, and tried to lay hold upon him by fear. He touched his fear in the way that he was most likely to be impressed. Devoted as Ahab was to nature, accustomed as he was to spend his time among the horses and the cattle and the farm, GOD's voice was clearly heard when for years the drought took possession of the whole country, when the cattle were perishing, when his money was being wasted. The power of the LORD was so manifested, that in very fear poor selfish Ahab was obliged to humble himself, and to seek mercy from the Most High, Who revealed Himself again with loving-kindness and tenderness, enabling Elijah the prophet to intercede and to teach by word and symbol.

In those three ways GOD revealed Himself to Ahab. He said to him, to use the oft-repeated phrase in the ancient history, "Thou shalt know that I am the LORD."

The second blessing which GOD gave to Ahab was the power to respond. He heard Elijah gladly—many refuse to listen to a single sermon!—and did many things in obedience to the prophet's commands.

Ahab was careful—would to GOD there were more Ahabs in London!—he was very careful that his upper servants should be men who feared GOD. He knew, as every intelligent head of a house knows, how much of the character of the under servants depends upon the person who is put into the place of responsibility, and instead of considering his own likings, Ahab had grace given him by GOD to appoint the GOD-fearing Obadiah to be the head of his household. And it must have cost him a great effort, because Queen Jezebel, who managed the house, hated Obadiah, and hated everybody who believed in GOD. So GOD bestowed upon him evidently

great grace, to appoint that GOD-fearing Obadiah to be the head of his household.

And once more. In spite of the unusual appearance that he presented—imagine Jezebel and her idolatrous train laughing at the king—he received such power from JEHOVAH that in the face of that idolatrous, sneering court, he humbled himself, he fasted, he lay in sackcloth, he acknowledged JEHOVAH publicly before the whole people, till the LORD GOD sealed the reality of his repentance (so far as it could be real in such a weak character) by saying, “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me?”

And, thirdly, GOD not merely revealed Himself to Ahab, He not merely bestowed upon him special grace to respond to a certain extent to this revelation, but He took him into companionship with Himself. He allowed Ahab to share His counsels. He gave him the high privilege of being a fellow-worker with Omnipotence. In 1 Kings xx, three times the prophet comes to Ahab, three times he teaches him how the battle is to be arranged; and when Ahab, conscious of his own unworthiness, asked who was to be the divinely inspired leader, GOD singled him out to be responsible.

“Who shall order the battle? He answered, Thou.” Thou, O Ahab, whom I have chosen; thou, the sovereign of Israel, to whom I confide My counsels. Be on thy guard. Strengthen thyself. The people that you have to fight against will say, The LORD is GOD of the hills, and not GOD of the valleys. Be of good cheer, Ahab, we are fighting together. You and GOD are going up to the battle; and “I will deliver all this great multitude into thy hands, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.”

So GOD revealed Himself; so GOD gave grace to

Ahab to respond ; so GOD treated him almost as a priest on that great battle-field. Verily this was a man highly favoured of heaven ; verily this was a man on the road to heaven ; verily this was a man whom ages yet unborn should celebrate as the instrument of JEHOVAH in defending Israel, vanquishing their foes, and manifesting the will of the Eternal.

But, on the other hand, this same Ahab again and again openly sinned against JEHOVAH. In spite of all that Elijah had done for him, in spite of all the godly counsels that he had received, he was not ashamed of setting a price upon the head of the prophet, and driving GOD's servants into the dens and the caves of the earth. He was not ashamed to forget all that he owed, as the father of his people, to protect them, as an honest man dealing with his fellow-men. He was not ashamed to come out as the murderer of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Nay, at last he openly defied GOD. As he had defied GOD in his youth by marrying Jezebel, so he defied GOD in his old age by going up, in spite of the voice of the Eternal, to fight against the city that GOD had told him not to attack. And he died in the very act of declaring before GOD and man that he would deceive GOD, that he was stronger than GOD, that the Word of GOD would come to nought, and the will of Ahab would be accomplished !

My brethren, what a contradiction ! How strange it seems as we take those two sides of Ahab's character ! And yet, was I not right on Sunday last in saying that King Ahab stands out as the representative of this congregation, preacher and people alike ; not, please GOD, in his awful end, but in the early and middle period of his life ?

Has not GOD indeed revealed Himself to us ? Is there a nation on earth that has GOD so nigh as GOD is

nigh unto us? Do we not as a nation perpetually acknowledge our belief in Him? Has He not blessed us, dear people, as a congregation? Has He not given us the desire to listen to His holy Word? When I sit sometimes in that chair, watching your faces as some stranger preaches to you, I am often struck with the rapt attention, the quiet, respectful silence, the evident desire to hear, by which the congregation is pervaded.

And further: as a congregation we, like Ahab, have not merely received the message and tried to attend to it, but we have been enabled to go out as fellow-workers with GOD. By our alms and by our prayers we have sent out into Africa, into China, into many a desolate parish in the East of London, missionaries of GOD. You have been allowed to fight for the LORD in the great battle which is now going on in England between good and evil; the weak and the helpless ranged on the side of GOD (made mighty by the indwelling Spirit of the Omnipotent), and the whole power of the world and the flesh and the devil ranged against them. And GOD has said to you as you ask, "Who shall order the battle?" "Thou." Your example has cheered many a heart—in this the day of grace, the day when men are entering into the valley of decision—to come forward on the side of the LORD against His foes.

And yet, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, is it not true (true for you, true for me) that there is another side to our character? The New Testament reminds us of that commonplace fact, that every age must be judged by the light which GOD has bestowed upon it. The New Testament tells us that want of kindness in these days is parallel with the murder of Naboth in days when life was cheap. Last Sunday's epistle tells us that the dwelling upon the things of time and sense: the loving money, the worshipping the seen and the visible, popularity, and the

like ; is just the idolatry to which Ahab yielded. In the light of the New Testament every sin of Ahab comes back in this our day with all its awful power and reality ; and preacher and people stand now before the GOD unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid. He sees when it is a question of a quiet life, or the sacrifice of everything for the LORD GOD Almighty ; when it is a question of just doing what the favourite Jezebel of the day may wish ; when it is a question of being popular, holding well with our friends, keeping with our party, having enough money to do what we like with, getting up when we like in the morning, staying quietly at home or entering into society, or, on the other hand, of going out, where the LORD is sending us, to battle, to deliver poor wretched sinners from the power of Satan. He sees when the question comes whether we marry whom we like, or some one whom GOD can bless ; whether we do what we like, or what GOD wishes. When some unpleasant truth is taught us, when GOD asks us to accept something in His Word which our reason cannot at present, in this state of finite intelligence, thoroughly grasp—oh, people, though we work with GOD and for GOD, though we have received GOD, though we are afraid of GOD, though we have humbled ourselves on our knees before Him, oh, do we not start aside like a broken bow ? Anything but this, anything but this teaching, anything but this sacrifice, anything but this work : anything, in fact, except what my GOD has ordered ! How we halt between two opinions ! One day for GOD, like Ahab ; one day, like Ahab, for the world and the flesh and the devil !

Never, I suppose, was there a better representative—alike in the good and in the evil side of his character—never was there a better representative of us in our

collective capacity, made up of priests and people, than in this strange contradiction of Ahab, the King of Israel.

And what was the secret, my brethren, of this contradiction? How was it that a man who had known GOD, that a man who had humbled himself in the sight of GOD, that a man who had actually been used by GOD as a Church-worker, could have that awful epitaph, "Ahab did more to provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him; there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD," and did abominably in the eyes of JEHOVAH? How was it? What was the secret?

It was this—and that was the reason why for a moment I passed away from the Old Testament to the Gospel of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, as communicated to the Romans by the Apostle S. Paul—Ahab knew GOD, but he did not glorify Him as GOD, and he was not thankful, and he became vain in his imagination, and so his foolish heart was darkened; and because he did not choose to retain GOD in his knowledge, GOD gave him over to a reprobate mind: a mind that at last became incapable of judging between right and wrong, so darkened was his understanding. This was the secret.

Men like Joseph and David and Daniel, and all the Old Testament saints (as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us) were alike in this: they accustomed themselves from boyhood to the practice of the Presence of GOD. They trained themselves from childhood to remind their inner lives continually, "GOD is by me, GOD is seeing me, GOD is before me." Enoch, you remember, walked with GOD, side by side with GOD. As you let your little child go before father and mother, you know, when they are coming to church, Abraham

walked before GOD with the FATHER'S eye always on him. Joseph and Daniel trained themselves into the same habit of the practice of the Presence of GOD, and so it became to them part of their being. When a great temptation came to Joseph, he just gathered himself up according to his custom. It had been his habit, when he got up in the morning, when he dressed himself, when he went out to business, when he went to see that the matters of Pharaoh's house were rightly arranged, when he went out for his walk, when he dressed for dinner, in everything, to think of GOD. And so, when a great temptation came, he thought for a moment, and he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD?"

And when any blessing came to him, a child born, a happy home given, or anything, directly he thanked GOD, and (as you read in the old story) said something to acknowledge GOD's goodness. So, when he was put in a place of great prosperity, when he was highly honoured, he said, "It is GOD Who is teaching me this, and Who is communicating it to the king by me His servant." This had become the habit of his life. And Abraham, David, Daniel, they were all alike (you can see it by studying the Bible afterwards); it had become the habit of their life to retain GOD in their knowledge, to let GOD settle, when they got up in the morning, what they did with their day, what they worked at, how long they worked, and in what way they co-operated with heaven in establishing the kingdom of righteousness and truth on the earth. In everything, not merely Sacraments, not merely sacrifices, not merely church-going (to use modern language), but from morning to night and from night to morning, there was a thankful remembrance of GOD Almighty's great love and all-pervading Presence.

And that made them happy? Till we have tried it, it seems bondage. Bondage! My brethren, it is the joy of life to know we have GOD with us, to know that GOD's strength is made perfect in our weakness, to know that GOD is working with us and we are working with Him, to know that GOD loves us, and that all our happiness and joy and prosperity have come from GOD, and that all our trials and sorrows and bereavements are only the hands of the Eternal clasping us closer to Himself, that we may know Him better and love Him more truly.

I must not, my brethren, dwell longer on the subject, but, believe me, this was the secret spring of the life of the saints, and the want of this was the secret spring of Ahab's downfall. He did not accustom himself to retain GOD in his knowledge; and therefore, of course, he could only look at and care for the things that he saw. He knew the difference between a nice quiet day and quarrelling all the day long with Jezebel because he would not kill a few prophets, and so he chose the ease, and he killed the prophets. It was so natural. He was not accustomed to think of GOD Almighty. What matter could it make, putting up an altar more, or doing some worship in a grove instead of the sacred place the Eternal had appointed? He never saw GOD. He did not know what it was to see GOD, and therefore, when a great temptation came, what had he to stand upon? What could he do but take hold of what he believed in, and lived for, and worked for, and at last (as he did) died for, and let the Unseen and Invisible GOD vanish from his thoughts?

Of course, when GOD made Himself felt, when he felt GOD's hand upon him, then he was obliged to submit, as you and I submit. When we are laid on a bed of sickness and are dying; or when we are bankrupt, or when our little child suddenly dies, or when we watch some friend

in great illness and suffering, then we cannot help seeing GOD. He is touching us, and, of course, we know it.

But through the want of the habit of our lives being the practice of the Presence of GOD, we all (preacher and people) are allowing far too much of the life that GOD has given to be spent for His glory and for the good of souls, to be frittered away in self-seeking and the performance of a mere perfunctory round of duties. GOD help us all; some more, some less; GOD help us! What are we to do?

First, receive something, dear people, from GOD. You can never practise the Presence of GOD till you believe in JESUS CHRIST, till you have given the heart up to Him, and received that great salvation. How can we delight in GOD, how can we love to retain GOD in our knowledge, unless we believe that He loves us? Oh! that is the first step: to kneel down and tell our GOD all our sins, and thank Him that He has given us a great salvation, to thank Him that the debt has been paid, that JESUS His own dear SON has borne our sins in His own Body on the tree. It is the first step, to receive.

Man's way is to give first, and then to receive something in exchange. GOD gives to us everything, and then afterwards He asks for thankfulness and love and obedience. But the first step is to receive. Oh! take it. Receive this forgiveness. Look up to that Saviour Who died on the Cross, till you feel flowing down into your heart that strange unutterable peace of which the Psalmist spoke, when he said: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

And then start afresh in the joy of that free forgiveness. Start, dear brethren, resolved to look at everything in the light of eternity. Start, resolved never to trifle with conscience, even if only a morbid conscience.

Consider a matter, and then decide; but never put it aside, however disagreeable the voice, however distasteful the duty, however painful the sacrifice. Look at that Cross, and see those pierced hands; see that forehead crowned with thorns; and let the LORD say, "I gave My life for thee; wilt thou not do something for Me? Wilt thou not offer Me something for a thank-offering before thy death?"

And, lastly, if we have sunk (as we all do sink sometimes) into the grovelling condition of slaves, if the only thing by which GOD can appeal to us is our fear, oh! then let the great GOD humble Himself as He will and appeal to our fear! Have you never known anybody whom you loved who has died in CHRIST? Have you never known any one who believed in JESUS CHRIST? Can you bear the thought of seeing them on the other side of the gulf, and of hearing the voice saying, "Son, remember, remember, remember!"—the voice that you would not hear, to the conscience that was drugged with the world's sweet opiates—"between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." Oh! if God's love on Calvary cannot touch us, let rational fear, the dread of being parted from those whom we have loved, let that appeal to us!

And if that does not touch us, if we are so selfish that, provided we have plenty to eat and drink and everything happy in this world, we would let everybody who died and belonged to us go where they liked, and trust to materialism being true, trust to death being the extinction of our life, trust to there being no future, and risk it all; then risk it all! Yes! venture it, my brethren, if you will. If you are right, it will be a glorious end: a glorious end, to have lived without having blessed a single human being! If you are wrong, if the testimony of GOD is true, if the testimony of saints

and martyrs and confessors—the greatest and the noblest in every age and land—be true; if Ahab this day is looking back on that strange paradox of his life; if you and I have to look back some day, the same man, woman, child, reviewing the history of this earthly pilgrimage: then let God appeal to our fear. Do you think that Ahab finds much satisfaction in those dark chambers of the future world? Do you think it is much satisfaction to have had a popular life, to have been liked by everybody, to have been a good soldier, a good patriot: to have done, in fact, everything except honoured God, except given glory to God, except retained God in his knowledge? Is it, do you think, to-day any comfort to Ahab to remember all his good feelings and all the times when God spoke to him?

Oh, God help us, the moment the temptation comes, to let Him speak to our fear! What is a man profited if he gains all the world (give him everything, heap it up!) and then, like Ahab, has that awful verdict: Ahab sold himself—for the sake of that which he could touch and see—he sold himself to sin against his God?

VI

GOD OR MAMMON

“There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”—1 KINGS XXI. 25.

THIS chapter, my brethren, contains the account of a crisis in the life of Ahab. Ahab, as we have seen in the earlier portion of his history, was only too true a picture of many amongst ourselves. He was an undecided man. He was always halting between two opinions. He did many things for GOD. On several striking occasions he acknowledged JEHOVAH as the LORD of his life. And yet he never scrupled to deny the LORD GOD of his fathers whenever a bold profession of religion, whenever doing the right thing (whatever it was) would have involved a sacrifice of his own ease and his own comfort. And so he allowed GOD's people to be driven into the dens and caves of the earth. He set a price upon the head of Elijah. He married, in direct defiance of the Divine law, a godless wife; and then he yielded one by one to her godless demands. He led his people into a distinct stage of national apostasy. Jeroboam had sinned, but he worshipped the true GOD, though it was under the image of the golden calves. But Ahab went further. He brought in a new system of religion. He established the foul worship of Baal as a rival to the pure faith of JEHOVAH. He took, in fact, certain steps by which, we are told, he “did more to

provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

Again, dear brethren, let me remind you that this Ahab was the man who chose holy Obadiah to be the head of his house. It was he who, on Carmel's heights, gave the sanction of his royal presence to the destruction of idolatry, who stood by approvingly while the waters of Kishon were stained with the blood of the false prophets. This was the man who was twice saved by JEHOVAH out of the hands of his enemies, who was taken again and again into the very confidence of heaven, who was employed as the instrument of the LORD in delivering his people from their Syrian invaders.

Oh, strange contradiction! Yet, dear brethren, not more strange than that which is furnished by the lives of many among ourselves. May GOD, the Blessed Spirit Himself, give power to the preacher, Himself apply this teaching to all our souls, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake.

Now Ahab, like every one else, possessed the mysterious gift of a free will. Ahab, like any one else, was subject to the counter influence of good and evil. And these counter influences, good and evil, were in his case embodied in the outward and visible forms of Jezebel and Elijah. These opposing forces confronted each other in that chapter from which my text is taken.

We see King Ahab in this chapter alternately under the influence of Jezebel and Elijah, under the influence of the world and religion. And then at the end of the chapter he is obliged to make up his mind. He is obliged, whether he will or not, to decide once and for ever whether his being is to be surrendered to the representative of heaven or to the prophet of hell.

It is a simple story, my dear brethren, and very quickly told. Naboth, the Jezreelite, had a pleasant vineyard. It lay hard by the palace of the king. And

Ahab was a man of taste ; and the vineyard was much required to complete his estates. Putting it into modern English, it was just this : he wanted to do something that he knew was not right ; or he shrank from doing something which he knew in his heart he ought to do. That is the modern translation of Naboth's history. His conscience told him that he ought not to touch that piece of land. Then came the power of evil to him personified in his idolatrous queen : "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Why should thy fancy be thwarted? Why walk along this thorny path of self-denial? Life is unbearable at such a pressure. What is the good of being king if you are not able to have your own way? Do nothing. Only wait. Do not use your power in stopping the current of evil. Just go with the stream." O brethren, is it not what every cunning devil says, "Do nothing very wicked ; follow the stream ; be quiet?" "I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth." Wrong triumphed. Right was put aside. Conscience was gradually silenced. The weak man held his tongue.

That was all. He held his tongue, and sanctioned by his silence the sin which he durst not himself have committed. And life in those days was very cheap. It was not much to kill a man then. So Naboth was put to death, and the vineyard was seized.

And then once more. The power of God, so long-suffering : the power of GOD, Who willeth not that any should perish : the power of GOD, Whose love can never be uttered by human lips and never fully conceived by human minds—the power of God drew near : GOD, Who wishes man to be saved : God, Who will do anything with a man except rob him of his liberty, deprive him of his free will : the power of this loving GOD is now brought to bear upon

Ahab. The king is sitting there in the garden of Naboth in the cool of the evening. It is a fair scene, that lovely Jezreel, compared by travellers to our own Windsor. It is a fair scene that lies spread out before him. The fruit of the vineyard is good for food. His whole system, fevered by long anxiety and by inward struggles, is refreshed as he sits there. Watch him, look at him as he sits in that quiet garden.

He looks up, and there at the open gate stands the personification of conscience. "There I see him, Elijah the prophet!" The flowers have lost their fragrance. The sweet music of the birds sounds like some awful discord in his ear. The fruit tastes like ashes, and his lips scarce touch it. He tosses it aside, for the shadow of death has fallen upon it.

A strange terror has paralysed his whole system. He shrinks back, he crouches like a hound beneath the lash, when he gasps out the words, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "I have found thee," said Elijah, "because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD."

And then, once more, the power of good prevails. The influence of Elijah, strengthened by the Blessed Spirit of God, lays hold of his being. "It came to pass," we read, "when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." He is not—observe each word, for each sentence here has a meaning—among the foolish ones who think that there is no God. He has no sympathy with the multitudes who have settled down on their lees, and who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good, neither will He do evil." Ahab does not even justify himself, as Adam did. He makes no excuses. The rough garb, the spare diet, the night of hardship, all attest the

reality of his convictions. Imagine ourselves saying before the whole congregation that is here, "GOD be merciful to me! I have loved myself. I have loved the world. I never made a sacrifice for CHRIST in all my life." Imagine it. Well, that is what Ahab did.

"To the LORD our GOD belong mercies." Oh, the depth of the riches of the loving-kindness of our GOD! Anything except rob us of our freedom! The penitence is accepted. "Seest thou," said GOD, "how Ahab humbleth himself before Me?" Oh, the delight of GOD to see that humiliation! Look at it. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself?" That was his day of grace. If only that moment he had done two things, if only he had accepted GOD's forgiveness as freely as GOD gave it, and then had made a thorough surrender of himself; if only, like the Ephesians in the Acts of the Apostles, who went out into the market-place and burnt the wicked books which were the outward and visible sign of their sin; if only Ahab had then and there gone out and broken down the altar of Baal, and with his own hand hewn in pieces the trees in that idolatrous grove, and then given Jezebel the choice of either submitting to GOD or going back home to her idolatrous friends; if only—oh, weak and wavering monarch of Israel, driven to and fro like the stubble before the wind, standing one moment on the rock of penitence, then swept back into the roaring surge! O Ahab, so near, so near to heaven, if only thou hadst known in that thy day! O GOD, if my people only knew in this their day the things that belong to their peace!

But we can all imagine, my brethren, what followed. Jezebel, the representative of the world, would bend down at first with a sort of sympathy to her husband in his penitential agony. "It is quite right. You have done right." And then she would tell him to be careful, to

guard against religious enthusiasm. "You ought not to do anything extreme." And then by degrees, as his conscience became more quiet, she would gently rally him. "How ridiculous he looked, did he not? Was it not absurd? A king, a man, in your position, putting on sackcloth! You could have been religious without any of those extreme measures."

But why dwell on details? Ahab's repentance, under the power of the personification of evil, was very short-lived. Like morning cloud and early dew it passed away.

It was his last opportunity. When next he is brought before us, he is in darkness, deep darkness. Outwardly he is the same. He is the same highly cultured gentleman, he is the same brave soldier, he is the same affectionate husband. The only difference is that GOD has left him to himself!

He is calm, contented, in a sense perhaps happier than he had ever been. He observes the forms of religion. He has four hundred so-called prophets to soothe and keep his conscience quiet by pleasant nothings. But any true man he gets tired of. Men like Micaiah he sends into prison to be fed on bread and water; anything to keep them out of his sight. He does well to himself, he keeps his good character; and, as the Psalmist prophesied, all men speak well of him.

He would not practise the Presence of GOD. He would not retain GOD in his knowledge. And so, as GOD had said, his understanding is darkened, and his idea of GOD becomes so degraded that he compares Him to the false deities of the Zidonians. The Almighty had told him, If you go up to Ramoth-gilead to battle you will be slain. He first disobeys GOD, for he has made up his mind to go. And then he tries to cheat GOD, as thousands in England are trying to cheat God by a

system of balancing what they do against what they leave undone. He tries to cheat GOD. He disguises himself. He puts off the kingly robes, and imagines that by that silly stratagem he can deceive the High and the Lofty One Who inhabits eternity!

Poor self-deceiver! Then, as ever, the Word of GOD stands true. An arrow shot at a venture accomplishes the will of JEHOVAH. Ahab dies, with an epitaph written by the finger of GOD in letters of fire on the walls of Hades, "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD."

My brethren, you and I are kneeling with Ahab this Lent. We are humbling ourselves. GOD is saying of us, "Look at that man, that woman, in church, acknowledging himself a miserable sinner." We are convinced, you and I, that the ordinary religion of the day is not the religion of the New Testament. We open our Bibles, and we find men constrained by the love of GOD to do nothing that GOD did not tell them to do, to give up anything rather than disobey GOD. We find a calm, cultured, refined man, like S. Paul, fired with that divine enthusiasm, and not caring whether the old intellectual society, to which he was accustomed, thought him a madman or not. We see a crowd of people looking upon their money, their time, their influence, their all, only as materials—to use S. Paul's words—that they can employ for glorifying CHRIST. I do count them as nothing, he says, that I may lay them at the feet of Him Who died for me and rose again.

And, my brethren, you know that in your conscience you do not believe that the ordinary life of the communicants of the present day is the life of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. And when we are in the

presence of our Elijah, when we are with the good man or woman (whoever it may be) who influences us, then the fire is kindled. Then the prayers for a week or two become more life-like, then our words become more guarded, then we make a spasmodic effort to be the Christians of the New Testament. And then comes back the world, our Jezebel, whoever it may be.

O brethren, is it not awful, that all these holy thoughts, all these longings to be better, all these spasmodic efforts that you and I are making, are signs that GOD is with us, that GOD is pleading with us, that GOD is speaking to our souls? Or else we should never wish to be better. We should never desire to go out, like the Apostle, with our whole being yielded up to the Crucified. It is GOD Who has touched us in that illness, by that open grave, in that moment when we knew that, however poor the preacher might be in himself, he was being used as the very mouthpiece of GOD, to utter the truth that GOD wished to speak to our hearts.

Then is it not common sense that if, like Ahab, we do not respond to these inspirations, if we will not do these two things: if, first of all, we will be so proud and self-righteous that we will not humble ourselves to take freely what GOD freely offers, the salvation of which I have tried to preach, which I am trying to explain in our meditations at present: if we do not receive that, and then, secondly, if we do not make up our mind that the Bible shall be the guide of our life, whatever it costs us: that we will, God helping us, begin a life of real, hearty surrender: then, dear brethren, in Bible language, you and I are "selling ourselves." GOD knows for what. It may be for something very gross. It may be for something very beautiful, very refined, very attractive. GOD knows.

But we are selling ourselves. The prayer, "FATHER,

forgive them, for they know not what they do," cannot apply to you and to me ; because we do know that there is that Blood of atonement, and that if we will take the trouble our sins can be fully and freely and at once forgiven. Therefore if, because we are so proud, we trample that Blood under foot, we are selling ourselves, we are doing it deliberately. If we will not let CHRIST have the whole surrender of our hearts to Him, when we know that He died for us, when we know He is asking us for all our being because He loves us : then, my brethren, we are selling ourselves. And it would be better, far better, believe me, at the last for you or me to stand before GOD like the poor benighted heathen, than to have to meet a FATHER Whom we have provoked by this halting service, a Saviour Whose Blood we have thus been trampling under foot, a Spirit Whose gentle whispers we have been silencing.

GOD has brought you out of the darkness into light. You see it as clearly as if JESUS were present in bodily form. You know what He offers you. You know what He asks you. Oh, wondrous sight for GOD's angels and the blessed ones in Paradise, father, mother, brother, sister ! I seem to see those blessed ones all looking down here. There is the soul in GOD's light. Some of those vessels let down their anchor and they remain in the light. Others go out, out into the dark shadow and are lost to sight for ever.

So was it with Ahab. GOD brought him out of the dark into the light. He paused, as we have seen, in the light ; and went into the blackness, the darkness !

O GOD, Thou seest us in the light this morning ! Men and brethren, which shall it be : to let down the anchor into the deep sea of GOD's great love, or to go into the black darkness of those who are satisfied when

GOD is not satisfied : of those who, like Ahab, are contented and happy when they are hurrying on to destruction ?

O brethren, you will not, you cannot, deliberately before GOD and the blessed angels sell yourselves : sell yourselves to work wickedness, for fear of being different to other people, for fear of being laughed at, for fear of making one brave venture for GOD and His CHRIST ! It cannot be. You cannot look up at that cross, and hear JESUS crying from His own awful agony, "Come to Me ; I love you ; I died for you"—you cannot do that, and then go out and sell yourselves for anything this world can give.

VII

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Consider your ways.”

HAGGAI i. 7.

OUR lot, my brethren, is cast in days wherein everything is tried by the touchstone of expediency. “What is the use of it? What results has it produced?” and so forth. We who belong to the Church of truth should be the last to undervalue the straightforward honesty, the hatred of pretentious morality by which such questions are often prompted. Still less should we waste our strength in contending against the spirit of the age, so different from the spirit of the world, which may indeed be directed, but can never be successfully withstood. To the test, therefore, of expediency I bring to-day that ordinance of Lent which whenever we open our Prayer Book is now forced upon our attention.

I put aside all questions of Church authority and Church precedent, however great the influence they may exercise on my own mind, and I venture to think that it is not difficult to show the utility of that season through which we are now passing—its utility at all times, but especially in this our busy century.¹ May GOD the HOLY GHOST, without Whom all human words are powerless, overrule what is said, to His own glory, for JESUS’ sake!

If we believe the teaching of Holy Scripture, one

¹ Preached at Windsor before Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Lent, 1871.

of the greatest dangers to which we are exposed in the spiritual life is that of self-deception. From the beginning it has been the aim of the spirit of evil to lull men's souls into a false security, to cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace; he fixes our thoughts upon the duties we perform, upon the words which we speak, upon our good Churchmanship, on our command of evangelical phrases, or our freedom from narrow-minded bigotry. He fails to remind us of the lack of that inward spirit without which all our outward observances, all fluent utterances, are valueless in the eye of heaven. He tempts us to confound with real advancement that apparent improvement, which only arises from the fact that our circumstances are altered, and that the temptations of early days are removed. With a fatal facility he supplies an excuse for every act by which our LORD is dishonoured, and the claims of our immortal spirit subordinated to demands of time and sense. Our ambition he describes as the laudable desire to use for the good of others the gift which God has entrusted to our stewardship. Our cowardice in witnessing for CHRIST assumes, under his guidance, the name of a modest shrinking from hypocrisy. Our idleness is condoned on the ground of invincible humility, or constitutional infirmity. Our extravagance is extenuated, because we must live as others live, we must spend what others spend. Yes, while those who love us are mourning over our defects, and mourning over the golden opportunities which we are recklessly squandering, or indolently allowing to fall from our grasp, we can remain utterly unconscious of the verdict which all around are passing upon our lives. Yes, like David of old, we can listen to the very message of GOD Himself, and all unconscious of its application can exclaim with unaffected indignation, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

If this is so, if Satan is thus able to blind our eyes, so that we do not see the abyss into which he is moving us, to close our eyes so completely that no word of friendly warning can penetrate into our hearts, if he thus possesses the deadly power of lulling each fear of an awakening conscience, of choking the spiritual life by the cares of the world, or soothing it by its empty pleasures, of rocking our soul into an unbroken slumber till he has carried us in that dull, fatal slumber out of time into eternity, out of the kingdom of light and life and salvation into the blackness of the eternal darkness ; if this be so, what may be—nay, in all probability, what is the condition of many in every congregation ? What is our own state ? Perhaps contented, when it would be better for us to be wrestling on our knees in all the agony of a broken heart. Perhaps bound round and round with Satan's fetters, but dreaming of heaven, and disbelieving in hell, because he has drugged us with his opiates. Perhaps deceived by all men speaking well of us, when this very night we are to meet a GOD to Whom we are still unreconciled.

If this be so—and unless you put the Bible aside you cannot deny that it is possible—surely we can desire no greater proof of His holy love than that from time to time He should, as it were, lay hold of our wayward wills, and compel us to anticipate the Judgement, compel us to examine our hearts as in the Presence of the Unseen and Eternal. Now this is precisely the object of Lent.

It is well known that that which can be done at any time is utterly neglected, so a special season is set apart for the special work. Thousands of Christians throughout the world are praying now with redoubled earnestness to the Incarnate LORD that He will open the eyes which Satan has closed in spiritual blindness, that He will reveal to every man, woman, and child their real state in the

sight of heaven. "LORD, that they may receive their sight," is the burden of our Lenten message. "Thus saith the LORD of Hosts: Consider your ways." But I may go further, and I may inquire if there is not a special force in these remarks, when considered in the light of this century?

It is admitted on all sides that our lot is cast in an age of great material prosperity. Luxuries which were almost unknown to our forefathers are now brought within the reach of almost all classes of the community. The wealth of the country has increased to a marvellous extent, the facilities of moving from place to place have been multiplied to a degree which a century ago would have been considered impossible. Wellnigh every quarter of the globe is now brought to minister to the comfort of our island home; every corner—as has been well said—is now cushioned, every rough place made smooth, every-thing which offends is taken out of the way.

Now, I have no wish to undervalue the temporal blessings which GOD in His love has bestowed upon us, rather—as we mark the appliances by which pain is lessened, and the hard life of the poor to some extent relieved—are we bound to thank the All-loving FATHER in Whom we live, and move, and have our being. Only it were folly to ignore the fact that there is a great danger lest by all these increasing comforts and increasing luxuries our national hardihood should be impaired, the strong backbone of national religion replaced by a nerveless system of effeminate softness and self-pleasing sentimentalism. Let me speak for a moment to those who are familiar with the history of bygone ages.

As we wander in spirit around the ruins of imperial Rome, there seem to be ever sounding in our ears the echoes of those ancient bards who strove in vain to save their country from the ruin into which it was hurrying.

What is the burden of those dirge-like strains? What is the future which is there drawn? The painted faces, the dyed hair, the domestic life corrupted, the impure stream flowing on and on till it quenched even the sacred fires of the home altars! Truth, honour, and virtue replaced by falsehood and deceit, and by open and unblushing vice. Students of the past! have you lost the power to mark the facts which are inscribed on the pages of our national history in this our century?

Is it not a fact that England can no longer boast before the nations of the world of the purity of her home life? Is it not a fact that persons are now welcomed in society against whom its doors would once have been closed? Is it not a fact that books are now read by England's daughters which in our fathers' days would never have been admitted into an English home?—that poor, wretched outcasts, whom we should try by God's help to save, but whose names ought never to be mentioned, are now made the topics of conversation: aye, the very models on which the dress of our English women are to be fashioned? Is it not true that our best merchants are everywhere deploring the lowered tone of our transactions, that England's honour is no longer, as in olden days, untarnished? Is it not a fact that, side by side with our luxury, we are disgraced as a nation by a mass of wretched pauperism which refuses any longer to be ignored?

Is it not openly acknowledged on every platform that the ties by which class was bound to class are almost, if not altogether severed in our metropolis by a mingled system of foolish flattery and selfish neglect: the "lower orders," as they are called, being quietly but surely trained for the coming crisis. We tell them that they are to be our rulers, and they believe us. They are shrewd enough to watch the signs of the times; they

mark the strength of England's manhood consuming itself on self-pleasing or self-aggrandizement ; they look with a bitter sneer upon the luxury from which they and their little ones are debarred ; they are waiting till their day has arrived ; they take our alms, but they feel no love for the giver. Why should they ? The almsgiving costs no effort, and that which would involve a real sacrifice is not bestowed.

A little band of laymen are working right nobly for GOD and His poor, but what of the vast majority ? There is time for "the Row," time for the office, time for the profitable business, time for the pleasant garden-party, but there is no leisure to go out and extend the hand of loving sympathy to the men who minister to their comfort, and who are dying around our very doors. My brethren, I speak that which I know to be true ; I speak, GOD knows, in no spirit of exaggeration when I say that I tremble for my country's future. I tremble beneath the smooth surface of this fashionable, pleasant, self-pleasing London life, as I hear the deep sullen roar of the great upheaving by which, unless we bestir ourselves, England will ere long be desolated.

If our senses were not entirely stupefied by our selfish indulgences, if our minds were not intoxicated by our national vanity, we should have little difficulty in deciphering the mystic letters which GOD is even now writing on the wall of our modern Babylon. Instead of thanking Him, like the Pharisee of old, that we have not deserved the chastening by which other lands have been stricken, we should gladly have responded to our Church's summons, and while we acknowledge the love which has not dealt with us after our sins, we should have fallen low this Lent in our great national humiliation, saying, "Spare Thy people, O LORD, spare Thy people, and give not Thine heritage to reproach ! Help

us, O GOD, help us in this our day to see the things which belong to our peace! Help us, O GOD of Hosts, to consider our ways."

Do you ask, "What has that to do with each of us here present in GOD's house to-day?"

I will tell you. The national life is only the aggregate life of every individual: in proportion as each member of the State becomes more GOD-like, in exactly the same proportion does he uplift his country to a higher platform. He gains more strength to intercede for its salvation, more strength to influence those among whom his lot is cast, and Lent is given for the express purpose of enabling every man, woman, and child to make a fresh start and a new beginning. What a blessed fullness of meaning there is in those words! Do you ask, "How can we so observe the few days that are left so as to obtain this result?" It is not possible, my brethren, to give a detailed reply to such questions in a single sermon. What is helpful to one may be injurious to another, but the general principles are nothing hard to realize. We must know GOD; we must love our brother. We must subdue the lower creature: less wine, a more sparing use of food, fewer luxuries, more self-denial in dress, in personal enjoyment. Even a heathen philosopher could tell us how by this life of watchfulness and self-restraint the higher part of our being is strengthened and the lower desires brought into subjection. We must love our brother, love him, not in word only—that is easy enough—"but in deed and in truth."

There are numbers of English parishes in which baptized men and women are living as heathen in a Christian land. Is it not worth some Lenten sacrifice to send a minister of the Gospel to help the clergyman now overwrought in mind and body, to help him to tell those neglected thousands of the Saviour Who loves them

and Whose Blood was shed to redeem them? Is it not worth some sacrifice to give one young man the power of making a new start in life, to rescue even one poor sufferer who has been left behind in the race of life from being degraded into the ranks of paupers?

Is it quite impossible to give up one day, or one evening in every week, and to visit for CHRIST'S sake the poor, the suffering, and the bereaved? We must "love" our brother by using our influence, be it much or little, to save his soul from the sins by which it is now perishing. One of England's greatest needs in the present day is a band of "district visitors" to the drawing-rooms, earnest Christian men and women, using their knowledge of society for CHRIST and HIS Church, who will live in the world, who will sympathize with the joys, no less than with the sorrows of those among whom their lot is cast, who will be full of interest in the innocent pleasures of the young and the light-hearted, but at the same time will be "strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might"—strong with the strength which has been gained by earnest prayer, and in silent meditation in the presence of their GOD: strong to take advantage of every opportunity of acknowledging their Saviour and their King: strong to check at once by a gentle remonstrance, or a silence more eloquent than words, everything which is opposed to the mind of Him to Whom their heart has been surrendered. Such I have seen in the London world. May GOD bless them a hundredfold in the quiet of these Lenten weeks. Lastly, and above all, we must honour GOD—honour Him, by more frequent attendance at the holy house: honour Him by snatching from our rest, or work, some extra time each day for private prayer and study of His holy Word.

There before that holy Table, or in the quiet of our

chambers, let us lie low before our GOD, and plead for our country in this her day of need. There, in simple trust, let us intercede for those whom we love, that they may be saved in these dangerous days from the snares of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Then let us examine our own hearts as in the sight of GOD. There put to our conscience the plain honest questions : What progress have I made since last Lent ? What sin has been crushed ? What sin have I tried to crush ? What new grace has been developed ? Am I on CHRIST'S side at all in the great battle against evil ? However blameless my own life, am I living for self, or for His glory, and the good of others ?

What have I done for CHRIST since last Lent from love to Him ? How many real sacrifices have I made of ease, comfort, health, for the sake of my fellow-men ? Is my religion any comfort to me ? Has "the Water and the Blood from that riven Side which flowed" been for my sin "the double cure ?" Am I at peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST ? If I die to-night will my soul be lost or saved ? "From all blindness of heart ; . . . from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; . . . by Thine Agony and bloody Sweat ; by Thy Cross and Passion, good LORD, deliver us."

VIII

TEMPERANCE

“Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go?”—JUDGES iv. 6.

THE holy enterprise,¹ my brethren, with which we are concerned to-day, like every other Christian work, is based upon the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. When the Eternal SON of GOD had accomplished on Calvary His great Sacrifice, with its mysterious influence on the destinies of a fallen humanity : when by the power of His Divinity He had uplifted the whole human race into so glorious a position that the most degraded of its children could be united to the Godhead, could be made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven : when the door of mercy had thus been opened to the outcast, the prodigal, and the rebellious, the work of our Redeemer was by no means concluded. The propitiation indeed had been once and for ever made. The one perfect Atonement for a world's guilt had been offered, and nothing was required to add to its inexhaustible fullness.

But new mercies were in store for the ransomed people. A divine society was solemnly established by the risen LORD : a kingdom divine in its origin, and yet so framed as to assimilate itself with every form of human society, and to adapt itself to every variety of human character : a holy city descending out of heaven,

¹ Preached in aid of the Temperance Movement of 1877.

having indeed the glory of GOD, and reflecting the light of Him Who is to look upon like the jasper and sardine stone, but yet a city fitted for the habitation of human beings. A holy Jerusalem was revealed by CHRIST to the little band of disciples who had surrendered their lives into His keeping.

Into this sacred organization—composed of laity as well as clergy, each member with his proper office—every individual convert was to be baptized. Within its holy walls he was to be assured, with a deep inward peace wrought in his heart by GOD the HOLY GHOST, of entire forgiveness and complete acceptance. He was to be confirmed with the sevenfold gifts of the same Divine Comforter; he was to be fed with the supernatural Food of the sacramental Bread and Wine; he was to be trained to believe that he was surrounded by an innumerable company of angels; and, even if alone on earth, he was living in communion with the spirits of just men made perfect, the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn. This Holy Catholic Church our LORD describes in the Bible in language of the deepest condescension and the tenderest love. She is His Body, and as the living Head He delights to feed each one of her members, to use her hands in spreading far and wide the blessings of her Gospel, to restrain her feet from wandering, and to send them as His messengers of mercy to the utmost parts of the earth. She is His Bride; and, as a true Husband, He delighteth to shower down upon her every token of His tenderest love. Departing Himself for a while into a far country, He entrusts her in His absence with the charge of all His worldly goods. He bids her, humbly indeed, but with perfect confidence, to act on earth as regent in His absence. He pledges His royal word that, though absent from her in body, He will be present with her in spirit,

that whatever she binds on earth shall be bound in heaven, that what she looses on earth (these are the Bible words), shall be loosed in heaven. He promises that in every difficulty, He, if she will trust Him, will direct her by His counsel; and, through His all-conquering power and His unfailing wisdom will so overcome evil with good as to cause even her failures and her mistakes to work together for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose.

Such (thank GOD for it!) is the teaching of Holy Scripture. Such is the position of our own true and living branch of the one universal Church. "As My FATHER hath sent Me, even so send I you." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "JESUS CHRIST," saith Saint Mark, "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of GOD." But the disciples "went forth, and preached everywhere" (observe the words), "the LORD working with them."

If this truth be once realized, our duty, my brethren, is clearly defined. Whenever the enemy of our King, the prince of the power of darkness, has reared in any part of the world a stronghold of evil, whenever the Church—as the representative of her absent LORD, the regent, ruling by His authority in His absence—when ever the Church has given the order to march, then every true soldier of CHRIST is obliged to arise and to gird on his armour and to take his part in the great crusade, whatever it be, that CHRIST, speaking by His Church, has thus inaugurated. Against that Magdala, however impregnable the fortress may appear, the strength of the kingdom of GOD must be directed. To that spot the best solders must be sent. Till that citadel has been laid low, there can be no rest for the army of our King.

This, my brethren, is the position which we occupy in this parish towards the great temperance movement

which is now making itself felt throughout the length and the breadth of England. It would be very easy to remind you of the havoc which is being caused by drink alike on the bodies and the souls of our fellow-men. It would be easy to tell you the long, sad tale of children killed by drunken mothers, of wives beaten to death by drunken husbands; to remind you how, under the baneful power of drink, excited by it, the noblest of our sons are every night being robbed of their early purity and are being led into sins by which for ever their conscience is defiled. I might arouse your indignation against this enemy of God and man by quoting to you passage after passage in which England is described by men of undoubted knowledge as the destroyer of mankind, the missionary of drunkenness, the nation which has nullified all the splendid benefits of her rule by carrying everywhere her national vice, by establishing the deadly supremacy of drink on the ruins of the noble races that by its influence she has destroyed.

We have cast in our lot as a parish with the temperance movement, because we have been summoned to it by CHRIST our King, speaking to us through the voice of His Church. Much good work (thank GOD!) in the cause of temperance has been done by the brave pioneers, many of whom have now entered into their rest. Never let their holy courage be forgotten. Never let them be robbed of the honour that is due to the men who first came to the front to rouse England to a sense of her degradation. The conflict, however, was too severe for individual effort, however heroic. Guerilla warfare is invaluable; but it is only by an organized army that a country can be really subdued. And so the national Church at last arose to a sense of the importance of the question. Bishops and clergy, meeting in solemn convocation, consulted long in that Jerusalem Chamber with

calm and prayerful deliberation, till at last they clearly recognized the voice of the LORD summoning His true knights to this holy enterprise. They heard the LORD GOD of Israel commanding and saying, "Go."

The next step was to lay the matter before the faithful laity, for the laity no less than the clergy are part of the Body of CHRIST. Those of us who are longing to restore to England her old constitutional privilege whereby the living voice of the Church was clearly expressed, those who are asking for this living voice to be given back, make it a part of their programme that there should be a definite opportunity for discussion, that there should be a representative assembly of godly communicant laity by whom every question should be discussed before it is proposed for public consideration. We want the laity to speak, we pray GOD to give us back again the old national voice of a living Church.¹ But in the meantime every effort was made to gather the feeling of the laity: in conferences, in meetings, by the public Press. And their opinion was clearly expressed. The Church as a whole recognized the voice of the King.

The next step was to send messengers everywhere, into every part of the country, to call upon every parish to furnish its contingent to the national army, to send some men, women, children, who by prayer and work would take their part in this new crusade. A guild was formed. This is a committee of men and women who are obliged not merely to work but to pray for some definite object. GOD in these days is so often forgotten, that you may go to a public meeting of great importance, and though the Almighty LORD has said

¹ From 1898 Convocation worked "to finish the beginning" of practical steps: the Constitution of the Representative Church Council was formed November, 1905.

that you are to acknowledge Him openly if He is to direct your path, you will see that meeting upon which a nation's destiny depends, begun, continued, and ended, without a single word of prayer to acknowledge the existence of GOD. And, therefore, in that unfortunate condition, it is absolutely necessary to remind people that without prayer every building that they rear will crumble into dust; a guild is a committee bound to pray as well as to work.

The guild is divided into two divisions. No one judges his brother. Some persons join what is called the temperance section. Others give their names for entire abstinence. It is well that the ground of total abstinence should be put clearly before us. It is simply this. Men and women feel that example is more powerful than mere precept. They should never for an instant condemn the use of any of GOD's good creatures. They should never pretend that they are better because they entirely abstain. They curtail their Christian liberty for the sake of others. They do exactly what S. Paul did, when he said that rather than cause his brother to stumble he would go without meat till he died. And so they give up what they like, and that which they have a perfect right to retain. They brave ridicule: the quiet sneer, and the more painful trial of being ridiculed as hypocrites or counted presumptuous. They dare to face the subtle temptation which the devil always reserves for those who stand in the forefront of the battle. They face these dangers deliberately, in the power of GOD and His Holy Communion. And instead of going to poor drunken men and saying, "Do this," they lay tender hands of sympathy upon them, and they say, "Come with me and I will do you good. Follow me."

And now, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, what is our duty? We have to look that guild in the face, and

we have to make up our mind, no man judging his brother, whether we should not join the little society of those who are united openly to stem—openly in the face of the world—that great current of evil. That is a question upon which I cannot pronounce an opinion. Every individual must decide. Then, we have to consider the general question: *Am I called by GOD to join the principle of total abstinence, and set an example to others?* This is a question requiring the greatest thought and common sense. Ask a doctor—one of those men whom GOD has given to London in the present generation, who are neither led away by a fanatical dream, nor, on the other hand, think it necessary to give stimulants everywhere: men who have sympathy with the movement without being dragged at its chariot wheels. A wise doctor can give much better counsel in this matter than any preacher of GOD, however earnest he may be. It requires thought: but if at last we hear the LORD GOD commanding us for the sake of a world enthralled by Satan to “go,” from that warfare there can be no discharge. We must arise.

But if we are not called to total abstinence, it is doubly necessary that we should take our part in the great temperance crusade.

This we can do—my words are very brief, brethren, I will only give you the heads—firstly, honour teetotallers. Never allow them to be disparaged in your hearing. Above all, never join the company of fools who make a mock of sin. Never join, even if you cannot control, that degraded conversation which is so common in society, which makes the quality of the wine and its history the one sole topic of conversation. Secondly, pray with double earnestness lest you should be hindering the work of GOD through any mistake that you have made, or self-indulgence. Thirdly, give your money.

In modern warfare the sinews of war are money, and the victory oft-times rests with the cause that can command abundant resources. Finally, we must clear our own minds on this subject, and this is a very disagreeable work. If we believe that CHRIST has inaugurated this crusade, we must henceforth have a definite rule as to the amount we allow ourselves to drink. We must give up drinking for enjoyment and begin to drink for health. Again, masters and upper servants, however unpopular it may make them, must stop the practice that is spreading in our midst of giving beer to every workman who comes into the house to do any common work however trifling. At the risk of losing our favourite servant, we are bound to control the amount of drink that is being used in our houses. We are bound to review the customs of society, however familiarized we have been with them from our childhood.

I will give you but one instance, for the time is nearly exhausted. It is this. I believe that there is an instinct—and I myself find much in the Bible to confirm it—an instinct that makes us, as we wish our children all happiness on their birthday, drink to them in the wine or the tea or the coffee as we say, “I wish you every happiness.” There is in the Bible—culminating in Holy Communion—a strange mingling between worshipping God and eating and drinking. Any man with a concordance can satisfy himself as to the truth of this. But when I recall my northern county, when I remember the practice there of public dinners continually given by the working classes—Foresters, Odd Fellows, and the like—when I remember how those men copied the customs, which in the upper ranks were perfectly harmless, giving toast after toast; when I remember how, simply “imitating their betters,” every night a certain number of men became drunkards and a certain number

of homes were desolate—I at any rate, without judging others, can never give my influence for allowing any toast to be given at any public dinner of which I have charge. This is but an instance. I may be utterly mistaken, taking an entirely exaggerated view. But if you, dear brethren, had seen those men reeling home from the public dinner, if you had watched those poor ignorant creatures and listened to the sobs of the broken-hearted wives, you, too, would have asked yourself the question, “Am I justified, because it does me no harm, to inaugurate a system which ruins the souls of men?”

My brethren, the whole enterprise is difficult, intensely difficult. We are in danger, on the one side, of fanaticism, on the other of lukewarmness. The only power that will enable us to go up with the calm, solemn tread that befits the Church of CHRIST is realizing that the great movement now inaugurated is based on the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST.

The LORD GOD has commanded, and we must go; and CHRIST will take care of the results. His kingdom must come. His Name will one day be hallowed in that glorious advent of which the echoes are already wafted to our ears. A King will reign in righteousness, and a drunkard will not be found in the regenerated earth. Already those golden doors are opening, already the flashes of that advent kingdom come and go, already I seem to see in the far-off horizon glimpses of the glorious day for which the widowed Church is watching and praying, “Come, LORD JESUS, quickly come.”

Meanwhile, my brethren, the LORD GOD has commanded you to “go.”

IX

SOWING AND REAPING

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

GAL. vi. 7.

HOWEVER mysterious, my brethren, may be the theory of our Blessed LORD's Atonement, the fact (thank GOD!) is so simply and so clearly revealed that a child of ordinary intelligence can receive it. He, to Whom our whole being is known in its entirety: He, before Whom past and future were ever present in their minutest details: He, by His own sovereign will, has provided one great Sacrifice for this our life-long guilt. All that was needed—whatever that might be, and the less we theorize upon that which has not been revealed the better—all that was required has been done and suffered for us by our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Our debt has been paid; the deed of condemnation has been cancelled; a fountain has been opened in which, like the Syrian leper, the most guilty may wash and be clean.

Over the wilderness of many hundred years the echo of that cry of the dying Saviour has been wafted to every heart which will accept its heaven-sent comfort, “It is finished.” “The Blood of JESUS CHRIST,” saith GOD, “cleanseth from all sin.” GOD's message now, since Calvary, to His sinful children is this: “Return unto Me, I will receive you graciously, I will love you freely.” GOD does not wait for a deep repentance.

GOD does not delay till the time has elapsed in which to test the reality of our conversion.

The self-same mercy which baptized us into His Church is again extended when we desire to come back to that home from which we have wandered. While the son is yet a great way off, the father sees him, has compassion upon him (because he is his father), banishes his every fear by the warmth of his embrace ; and the fatted calf is killed, and the ring of adoption is placed again on his finger without any delay, and the dark memory of the past is obliterated, as the weary wayfarer looks up at that father's face, feels with joy all that father's love streaming like a flood of light into his inmost being, and listens to the welcome sound of the father's voice, "This my son was dead but is alive again ; he was lost, and is found."

Such, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, is the royal way in which GOD deals with His rebellious children ; He grants them entire and complete absolution, a forgiveness as all-embracing as the love of Him from Whose compassion it has proceeded. For all whose consciences have been awakened, the first step is simply like little children to acknowledge that they have sinned, and then at once to believe this very day in that Saviour Whom GOD has given, to feed this very day upon the promise, to look up in humble trusting power to that crucified and ascended LORD, till they can say in the restful calm of an assured reconciliation, "I have peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST ; I know on the testimony of GOD'S OWN Word that I am forgiven through JESUS CHRIST my LORD."

This, I repeat, is the first step. This was the instruction that CHRIST gave to those who came to Him on earth, asking what was the first work of GOD. This, said CHRIST, is the work of GOD, that you believe

on Him Whom GOD hath sent. Thank GOD, my brother, if you are able to enter into the meaning of the words that have been spoken. Cherish that blessed consciousness. Do what you can to enable others to share its unspeakable happiness. Only do not turn GOD's great blessing into a curse by being contented with simply having received from His bounty one of the earlier gifts of the Christian covenant. Never forget that because you have been forgiven, because the past has been washed out in the precious Blood, a life-long struggle, a daily wrestling with evil, a continual witnessing for CHRIST is before you ; for the eye of your GOD is upon you, and the recording angel is entering in the book of everlasting remembrance every thought and word and deed of every day. Just as the dying man oft-times sees before him, as it were, the record of his life, just as by a lightning flash days long forgotten are revealed to his awakening conscience, so, my brethren, when the roll of our life is unfolded in the Presence of the Eternal Judge, many amongst us will be startled at the solemn impartiality with which our future portion shall be assigned. "Be not deceived," saith GOD—knowing well the subtlety of the devil and the power of this present world and the deceitfulness of human nature—"GOD is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The first application of the text, as many of you are aware, is to almsgiving. I am glad that to-day I am making no appeal to you, not asking you for money, and therefore the edge of this part of the sermon will not be blunted by the underlying thought that it is but a charity sermon. There is no special offertory. But the first application of the text is to almsgiving. Money is, on this side the grave, the means by which our varied tastes are gratified. Hence, if you watch

carefully the objects upon which a man spends his money, you can form a very fair idea (of course not perfectly correct, but a very fair idea) as to the main current of his desires. You describe him in ordinary conversation as a gluttonous man, as sensual, as refined, as a man who is proud of his house, as a man who takes an interest in art, a lover of art or of society, as fond of horses or of dress, according to the channels through which his income is disbursed. In whatever direction you see the main current of his money flow, you are pretty clear in your own mind that there the man's heart is mainly fixed.

Now the Bible simply endorses this principle of natural religion, simply puts its seal upon that which is accepted by the mass of mankind. If we try to understand the eighth and ninth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians; if we consider the portions of Holy Scripture which are read as our offertory sentences, comparing them with the context and with the marginal references, we shall, I think, be surprised to find how GOD almost seems to make the way in which we deal with our money the very test of our religion. It is very striking, when you take the Bible and a concordance and really write down what GOD says about money. Feelings, the Bible says, are very deceptive. Phrases about GOD come very easily to some lips, while other mouths find it almost impossible to frame them. If we desire to know our real relation to our GOD and FATHER, if we wish to know whether GOD is really in all our thoughts or not, we shall not be much deceived if we bring our profession to this very simple touchstone, the expenditure of our annual income. If any man or woman in this church does not desire to be deceived—some would rather be deceived till they die, would rather never be troubled or perplexed with

any misgivings, would rather risk eternity and enjoy life; I am not speaking to them: GOD have mercy on them!—if any man or woman really would like to anticipate the Judgement-day, if any one wishes honestly to know what his Judge would say, if he were to die to-night, that man or woman cannot do better as a preliminary step than to sit down in the most business-like manner and review the way in which his annual income is expended. I have received from GOD—in the last seven years, or the last year, or the last twenty years, whatever it may be—so much. Put it down in black and white. I have received in allowance, wages, income, capital (it matters not) so much. I have spent directly upon GOD and GOD's Church, GOD's poor, GOD's work, so much. Write it down.

I have spent (rightly or wrongly: I am not speaking of that now) on myself, how much? Think; then write it down. On my house, on furnishing it, on buying more property, on increasing my landed estate (perfectly rightly, possibly; do not misunderstand me), how much? I have spent on my children, my friends, my country, how much? And in all this expenditure—the amount that I have given to myself, my home, my children, my country—how far, to the best of my recollection, did I recognize the authority of GOD in the distribution? How far, when I divided my income or my allowance, did I recognize GOD, and decide as to the amount that was to be spent on myself, my house, my children, the world, by GOD's revealed will? No one, of course, can form the slightest judgement upon his brother, as to the secret motives by which he has been actuated. GOD Almighty knows; but no one else, with perfect accuracy. And this investigation, my brethren, has been the means already of saving many

souls. It takes some time ; but, believe me, the time will not be wasted.

It is much better for us gradually to discover the truth now, than to wait till it is burnt into our hearts for ever by God's great word, "Remember, My son, remember thou didst receive from Me those good things." Remember GOD cannot be mocked. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

And that which is true of our money is true also of every talent which GOD has entrusted to us. While GOD refuses to recognize any claim on the part of those who are at best but pardoned rebels, while all that we shall ever receive is owing to the free grace of GOD given through JESUS CHRIST, while GOD—blessed be His Name! oh, what comfort there is in the thought!—reserves to Himself the royal prerogative of sometimes taking an earnest penitent and leads him on by one great spring into the very foremost rank of the spiritual army, so that the last are literally made first and the first last : still, as a general rule, science is right, GOD is the GOD of order. As a general rule GOD deals with men according to certain fixed principles which are written in the plainest language in the volume of Holy Scripture.

My brethren, there is something very solemn in the practical business-like way in which Almighty GOD represents Himself as taking account of His servants. He describes Himself as overlooking nothing ; even the cup of cold water that was given in His Name is remembered and put to our everlasting account ; the number of the talents that we receive, ten, five, one, is clearly distinguished in each case ; this man ten, five,

one: no confusion of thought in the mind of the Eternal God. Each has received his own opportunities, more or less: education, influence, time, beauty; God only knows the infinite variety; it would take an hour to describe it. And the Almighty God gives us that awful liberty which separates us from the dumb creation. He gives us ability to take these opportunities, these hours, this power, these attractive influences that draw people round us, whatever they be. He allows us either to devote them to His service or to use them for ourselves, so that we may be liked by other people, so that we may gain a character for being popular and pleasing, so that we may be looked up to for our intelligence, our wealth, our amazing wisdom, our practical common sense, our super-eminent holiness. He gives all these things into our hands, and He says, "My child, you are free; use them." And then, as a general rule according to the sowing is the reaping in the spiritual no less than in the natural kingdom. We have our reward, as God says; or, as it is in the very solemn original, "We have our reward, and take it away with us." We take away the popularity, we are considered very holy, we are thought extremely good company, we get a character for never doing a foolish thing; we have got it all. The only thing is, that if we have not carried the cross, of course we do not wear the crown hereafter. If we have shrunk from using all these opportunities bravely and boldly for CHRIST the King, it would not be right, it would not be (even according to man's reason) fair, that the person who has had everything that he wished for as the result of the earthly sowing, should have over and above the glorious prizes of the heavenly kingdom, the abundant entrance into the companionship of angels and archangels, the close fellowship with God for all eternity. It would not

be right that the man who has only used his tongue so as to be able to frame the sentences that shall commend him to mankind, should by an inspiration be able suddenly to take part in the grand chorus of the redeemed in heaven.

My brethren, I need not dwell further on the subject. It commends itself to every impartial man. Cricketing, and boating, and so forth, are excellent things in their way. But when the boy goes out into life, he does not obtain the highest place in the world's arena simply because he was a good cricketer. If we sow for this life, we win ; we get what we desire, and GOD is good to us. GOD grants it to us. Only He ever sounds in our ears that most solemn principle : "Be not deceived ; GOD is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth"—every hour scattering the seed, whatsoever, day by day, he sows—"that shall he also reap."

I have left myself, brethren, a very short time for the few practical words of conclusion.

First of all, it seems to call us away, who believe in JESUS CHRIST, to be brave ; to carry our cross with more courage ; to have something like the devotion of the great saints and martyrs, something of the fortitude of the confessor whose festival we keep to-day.¹ When Almighty GOD allows sickness and sorrow and trouble and failure and bankruptcy to come upon us, when we are disappointed at being misunderstood, when our best efforts fail us and our hands hang down and we are almost tempted to think GOD is dealing hardly with us, let us remind ourselves that we were never sowing to the flesh but sowing to the Spirit. If GOD gives us earthly happiness, blessed be His Name : so much over and above. If GOD grant to us to have influence with others and to be loved by others, thank GOD for it : so

¹ S. John Baptist.

much over and above. But when in His infinite wisdom, all this is taken away, and our hearts are failing, oh ! men and brethren, let us be brave, let us strengthen ourselves, and say, "I never sowed for this life, for this life passeth away. I was sowing for the glorious kingdom where my GOD will say to me, 'Well done ! thou hast carried the cross ; thou hast cast thyself without a single reservation on the great sea of thy FATHER'S love, thou hast ventured all for Me ; enter into the joy of thy LORD.'" So we shall rise up into the spirit of that great confessor. We look back on the Baptist's life and we marvel at the power that was given him to shake men out of their slumber. Yes ! but how was the power won ? By wellnigh thirty years in that lonely desert, feeding on the locusts and the wild honey, by living a life that I at any rate (you know how it is with yourselves) durst never venture. Thus he sowed loneliness, separation, entire devotion to GOD ; and he reaped the harvest of mighty power by which the world was conquered.

And then there came another opportunity to the Baptist. He had gained great influence with his sovereign. He was intensely popular. The world would have told him to be silent and to hold his tongue, and not to risk his position. But the Baptist knew that Herod was committing a sin which would bring utter ruin to the country over which that godless sovereign was reigning. And so, calmly and humbly, he said, "It is not right ; it is not according to the law of GOD." And what was the result ? The world would have told him, if he had inquired of it, that if he remained silent he would have gained influence, and done a great deal of good quietly. But he was sowing for the life eternal, and he reaped the harvest. The king was angry ; he sent him to prison ; he martyred him. But the Baptist's

spirit lived, and years afterwards Herod trembled whenever he heard of a man speaking for GOD or doing GOD's great work. "It is," said he, "John the Baptist, whom I beheaded ; he has risen from the dead."

My brethren, if you look back on the life of the Baptist, which of us would not rather have borne that cross and been cast into prison, than have been like the poor young ruler, who loved CHRIST and was loved by CHRIST, but was afraid of standing firm to the truth, afraid of witnessing for a principle, determined to win in this life, and so went away sorrowing ? What a man sows he reaps. Thank GOD that we are sowing for the other life now, if we are reaping now and then tears in this life. Let us thank GOD if now and then we have some trial to bear ; it is the badge of discipleship, it links us to the Crucified.

Lastly, if ever the thought should come unto us—and it will come, believe me, to the best and bravest, when the body is weak, and the mind is almost worn to death, and the spirit seems so crushed, and GOD seems so far away, that it almost seems as if the unbeliever were true and GOD never lived—if in these days we are tempted even for a single moment to give up the life of cross-bearing, to take care of the money that we can hold, or the earthly love that we feel, and the popularity which winds itself imperceptibly round the heart of GOD's greatest saints : my brethren, remember here, I beseech you, by day and by night, the voice of that GOD speaking unto you, "What a man sows, he shall reap ; he that soweth to the flesh must of the flesh reap corruption ; he that sows for this life must sooner or later see the house falling and the garments crumbling into dust, and leave behind him the body that he has pampered as the food for the crawling worm ; all that is of the earth earthy must be left behind." Oh ! listen then to the

voice of that GOD. Think of that poor man whose story CHRIST has told us, who did nothing wrong, but only forgot to sow the good seed for the everlasting life. Oh! anticipate the day when the voice shall ring into that heart of thine (GOD grant it may never be so!), "Remember!" Oh! think of it when you are tempted (as I am tempted, as all of us are tempted at times) to be false to that glorious GOD. Oh! hear the echo brought from the other side of the narrow gulf: "Remember! oh, son! remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Oh! look on to the day when the lesser life must fall from us, when the world's dream must be broken, when with a shudder we are obliged to feel that our naked soul in that great black world must stand face to face with GOD! And then remember how many have died this year in our midst and say, "O GOD! write it on my heart, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'"

PART IV

THE DEDICATED LIFE

“Grant that whosoever is here dedicated to Thee, by our office and ministry, may also be endued with heavenly virtues and everlastingly rewarded, through Thy mercy, O Blessed Lord God, Who dost live and govern all things, world without end. Amen.”

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM¹

“ Thus saith the Lord God ; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.”—EZEK. xvi. 59, 60.

THESE words, my brethren, form part of a burning appeal addressed to the Jewish Church. Under the figure of a husband pleading with his bride by whom he has been wronged, JEHOVAH reminds the idolatrous nation of the waywardness with which she has wearied her GOD, the ingratitude with which she has requited His manifold blessings, the treachery with which she has laid the tokens of His affection at the feet of the false deities of the surrounding nations.

The love wherewith she is beloved of her GOD, however, is too deep to allow Him at once to abandon her to the punishment which her sin has merited. She is to be chastened, but not entirely destroyed ; she is to be dealt with as her own stern law was accustomed to treat the wife who had been false to her marriage vow. “ I will judge thee,” saith GOD, “ as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged.” “ They shall bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone

¹ S. John Baptist's Day, 1878, Consecration of the Bishops of Lichfield (Archbishop Maclagan), Queensland, and Nassau.

thee with stones; and they shall burn thine houses with fire." And then, from behind the dark thunder-cloud, the evening light gleams forth with all its softened radiance. Humbled and purified, she is to be welcomed back to the love of her heavenly "Husband." "Thou hast despised the oath, and broken the covenant"; but "I will remember My covenant with thee"—the troth plighted—"in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed . . . when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD GOD."

My brethren, as we read the stirring words of this glorious prophecy, we seem to be listening to some divine epic, wherein are recorded the varied fortunes of this fair Church of England, into which by God's mercy we have been baptized: her lowly origin, her barbaric ancestors; the scorn of imperial Rome; the strange intertwining of her supernatural life with the earthly prosperity of the mightiest empire of modern civilization; the prestige of her ancient establishment; her spiritual peers, standing in the very forefront of England's nobles; the subtle minds and the strong wills of her children, who have written large their names on the annals of their country's history, who have directed her destinies and shaped her future. Thy birth and thy nativity, O Church of England, is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite: and as for thy nativity, in the day that thou wast born, none eye pitied thee to have compassion on thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field. But I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great. I clothed thee with broidered work—the accidents of thy position—and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered

thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck, and I put a jewel on thy forehead, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thou didst eat fine flour; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

The student of English history, as he listens to the burden of Ezekiel's vision, sees ever passing before his eyes the manifold critical periods in which the resurrection power of the CHRIST has been manifested on behalf of the Bride whom He has redeemed. "I passed by thee; I said unto thee, Live! Yea, when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted, I said unto thee, Live!"

How marvellous, my brethren, are the noble works which we have seen in our own day, and which our fathers have declared unto us! How wonderful have been the varied ways in which, even in this nineteenth century, the LORD GOD has risen to help and deliver us! What need is there for me to dwell at length on the Evangelical awakening whereby the teachings of the old Catechism as to a free forgiveness, and the glorious liberty of the ransomed soul, and a present salvation, were disentombed and revived? What need is there for me to recount the varied phases of the great Church movement by which it was succeeded, when, as the superstructure, sacramental teaching was reared by Divine wisdom on the deeply-laid foundation of personal knowledge of a personal Saviour; the supernatural force with which the old doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church and of the Communion of Saints were impregnated with a Divine electricity, and burnt into the hearts of men of truth with a sacred fire enkindled by GOD the HOLY SPIRIT? What need is there to go over the oft-told tale of GOD's almighty love and unfailling wisdom, as manifested to this Church of England?

And now, if Evangelical phrases seem to have lost their force—if it be true, as some say, that the words which once were forged in the fire of the heart-agony of the lonely Evangelist are degenerating into mere shibboleths of a party ; if the latter Church Revival is, in the judgement of some, being perverted into the re-introduction of mere forms and phrases—if this outward Church system, once inspired by the breath of the HOLY GHOST, is now being found as powerless to quicken life as the grave-cloths in which the sacred Body of our LORD was enshrouded : if both the Revivals of the nineteenth century have spent their strength, still—blessed be His Name—we recognize in our midst the Presence of the Holy One of GOD—the true Elisha—the Holy One Who passeth by us continually. He is in our midst, Who is alive for evermore ; Who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Who has said unto His Church, in her corporate capacity—to every living branch of the one mystic vine, to every living soul baptized into His sacred fold—“Because I live, ye shall live also.” Yes, He Whose eyes flash like a flame of fire into the very heart of the bride whom He loveth ; He Who recognizes, as only a true husband can recognize, by an instinctive sympathy, her every need—He, very GOD and very Man, is now vouchsafing unto us the very revelation that is required by the exigencies of the age in which our lot is cast : a revelation which contains in itself, and uses with ungrudging confidence and unmingled thankfulness, all that was good and true and beautiful in the past, and yet believes that “God fulfils Himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world,” and thus, in union with the ascended CHRIST, is itself separate from and superior to all the mere partial developments by which it has been preceded.

And what, my brethren, is this Evangel of the nineteenth century, of which I speak in such high-sounding words? What is this Gospel that GOD is sending to cheer and gladden our hearts, in this nineteenth century? It is new, yet old. It is the resurrection of the life which was first embodied in the history of the Acts of the Apostles. It is "the glad tidings of the kingdom," which JESUS went everywhere preaching. It is the Gospel of the kingdom, of which the Apostle Paul testified, as the only means by which the systematic organization of worldly power in that and in every age could be successfully withstood. We are bidden, now, not to be looking forward to a vague and shadowy future, but to believe that, in virtue of the Incarnation, this kingdom of GOD has been already established in our midst; that we have been baptized into a spiritual world, organized under a living Head, indwelt by the living Spirit: a world wherein death has been robbed of its sting: a world of life and light, wherein the visible and the invisible are blended together into one glorious fellowship; members of one living body; soldiers in one great conquering army, going up to take possession of the world, that the glory of the LORD may be revealed, and all flesh may see it together; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Yes, my brethren, the very paradoxes by which the natural man is startled give strength and victory to all who have risen out of mere Evangelical movements and Church battles into a broader and wider and deeper life; whose eyes have been opened to see the glory of the new Evangel, the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem, sent down from GOD unto earth. They recognize that they have already come—not that they will come—"unto Mount Zion, unto the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living GOD; unto the innumerable company of the

angels, the general assembly and Church of the First-born, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." Instead of the strong men becoming effeminate (as used to be said when only half a Gospel was preached), the women now become men—strong men, by the power of the Living God that dwelleth in them. For in this kingdom—Oh, mighty paradox, to the glory of our God!—weakness, conscious weakness, is a preparation for abounding power. In this kingdom, the prayer of a child can shake the foundations of an empire, when linked with the might and the glory of the Great High Priest within the veil. In this kingdom, suffering and failure and apparently fruitless effort can all be endured, because the King has told us that the corn of wheat must die, if much fruit is to result. The outward man must suffer decay, if the inner man is to be renewed and made strong. Utter helplessness is to be welcomed, that the power of the glorious God may be made perfect. We glory in infirmities, we triumph in every difficulty, because in the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven we have been taught to recognize in every distress, in every perplexity, only the materials whereby the power and wisdom of the indwelling Spirit shall be more abundantly revealed.

Wheresoever this Gospel of the kingdom has been revealed, in one sense, nothing is great; in another, nothing is commonplace. The entire world—every thought, and word, and deed, each struggle and sacrifice in the home life—the world of art and of science, the world of commerce and of politics—all is irradiated with the light of the glory of the supernatural kingdom in which we that are baptized, and that believe, live and move and have our being. In the deepest sense, the text which is written large on the central hall of our

commerce has been realized : "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof." Bishops, in such a kingdom, are obliged to exercise "godly discipline," because they know that it is CHRIST Who is ruling in them. Priests are obliged, if they believe the New Evangel, to submit to that "godly discipline," because they hear the voice of the King in the words of those who are set over them in the LORD. The entire body of the faithful is lifted up above this lower earth, as it gazes steadfastly, through the mist and through the blinding darkness—right out where S. Stephen looked—into the face of the glorious LORD Who is living in the midst of us : the CHRIST Who baptizes, the CHRIST Who confirms, the CHRIST Who communicates, the CHRIST by Whom men are ordained, the CHRIST Who to-day consecrates those who are to be sent out in the Name of the LORD.

Yes, my brethren, this living CHRIST is the centre, the Alpha and the Omega, of this glorious kingdom. The New Evangel proclaims that the word of our God has been fulfilled already in our midst :—I passed by, I saw thee, and I said unto thee, Live !

"Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty." Yes, thank God, in spite of all the uncertain sound of the human voice, the trumpet of God is being heard in the uttermost parts of the earth. It is not to Lichfield only, but to Nassau and Queensland also, that the messengers of the Gospel of the kingdom are this day to be sent. To the offertory of to-day, then, give largely, my brethren ; for upon the work which that offertory represents depends to a very large extent the future of this Church of England.¹ What is a ship, without its captain ? What is an army, without its officer ? What is a Church, without its proper supply

¹ The Offertory was devoted to the Fund for the Increase of the Episcopate.

of bishops? Give, then; that more bishops—centres of life and power and godliness—may be established everywhere through the fair fields of this England of ours.

Everywhere, thank GOD, spiritual life is deepening. The fruit of that Day of Intercession is being carried into the furthest corners of the earth. From every quarter of the globe, the sound is heard of many footsteps—the result of prayer in the old Evangelical days, the result of sacrifices in the great Church-awakening days, the result of seed sown in tears, now being reaped in golden harvest; the sound of many footsteps is heard—coming to us from north and south and east and west, coming up to thank GOD in the Lambeth Conference—may GOD prosper it!—for the Church which they represent, and for the revelation of the kingdom. All the effort, and all the absence from dioceses, and all the long travels by land and by sea, may well have been ventured, if only for the sake of standing shoulder to shoulder, and saying with one heart and one voice, in the face of the world and the powers of evil that hover around the Church, that ancient Creed, in the power of which they live and suffer, and are prepared—if GOD will—to die: “I believe in GOD the FATHER; I believe in GOD the SON; I believe in GOD the HOLY GHOST; I believe in one holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity; I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints.”

Now, my brethren, what has been our response? Like Israel of old, we have despised the covenant. Our root-sin has been theirs: the sin of unbelief. When GOD the HOLY GHOST was promised, He was to convince the world—not merely the outer world, but the world-spirit in the Church, in the hearts of the regenerate

—He was to convince the world of sin, because men believed not in CHRIST.

Some may be weary of the word “faith”; they may think that it is only a canting utterance; but “faith” is the grandest word in human language! It is by the power of faith that the Saints in every age have lived and suffered and died. Want of faith in CHRIST issues in dependence upon that which is outward and visible; unbelief produces worldliness.

There has been amongst us a want of faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And so, there has been a shrinking from those lonely struggles in the wilderness, from those dark hours spent in solitary wrestlings with GOD, by which alone the spiritual muscles can be braced, and men can be made to go forth, to baptize with the fire of GOD the HOLY GHOST. We have not faith enough to believe that human work, and the thousand details of life, can all be managed by GOD; so the quiet hour in which the fire of our hearts was to have been kindled is postponed, or only superficially observed.

Thus, as we have not been alone in the wilderness with GOD, there has been a sad lack of the power of the great Baptist whose festival we are keeping to-day. There has been a want of patient suffering for the Truth’s sake; there has been a feverish impatience for results, an impossibility of waiting, and of looking on to the day when he who soweth and he who reapeth shall rejoice together. There has been an utter want of faith in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT to rule and guide the Church. There has been a want of brave, honest determination, like that of the Baptist, fresh from the power of the desert, to constantly speak the truth at all times and in all seasons—a determination boldly to rebuke vice, as well as patiently to suffer for the Truth’s sake. There has been an unworthy longing for a

miserable compromise by which peace can be purchased, instead of a grand comprehensive publishing of The Kingdom, wherein every gift can be utilized, and every power that GOD has bestowed can be purified and made into one harmonious whole, by the power of the HOLY GHOST. There has been an awful cowardice in facing burning questions—as if only the Church of the early ages was inspired by the HOLY GHOST—as if only the Church of the Apostles had learnt to pray the Whitsuntide Collect, that the Living GOD would “guide us into all truth,” overcome all difficulties, harmonize all conflicting opinions, as in the beginning, bring order out of chaos and light out of darkness.

So we have been content to act as mere tenants of a day ; as if we had had no faith in the glorious future of the Church—as if we had no children for whom to prepare the way of the LORD ! We have been too prone to shirk difficult and unpleasant questions ; content if the building in which we dwelt was sufficient to withstand the power of the elements raging without ; content if all went well for our day ; as if we had no belief in the life everlasting, and had never heard of that kingdom of GOD which knows no ending.

The natural result of this want of faith is, of course, utter worldliness. The poor child who does not believe that CHRIST loves her, and does not know that her sins are forgiven, tries to quench the thirst of an unquiet heart in the broken cisterns of the world's pleasure. And so the Bride of the LORD, if she does not believe that there is the strong arm of her Beloved on which she can lean, that there is a strong voice speaking comfortably to her in the wilderness, saying, “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people,” “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” is obliged inevitably to lean upon that which is outward and material, something which

can be touched by the human hand, and seen with the human eye. Thus, we put our trust in human organizations; acting against our own judgement, we would rather do despite to the Spirit of GOD, Who teaches us to be more patient and trustful, than disappoint a little band of disciples whom we have taught to cry in our ears, "Rabbi! Rabbi!" We lean—not upon the invisible GOD but on popular opinion, on the judgement of the great and the learned and the intellectual. We are afraid to ring out the old Gospel of "foolishness," for fear of being accounted fools for JESUS CHRIST'S sake. We leave the living oracles of GOD for the self-made oracles that are found in our clubs, or at the corners of every street. Like rustics in some "vanity fair," we stand half bereft of our senses, as we gaze on the pomp and the glory of a world which passes away; or, to change the illustration, we follow the crowd whom the Apostle saw in Apocalyptic vision, that "wondered after the Beast," the representative of the power of this lower life. We "wonder" at it, with the refinement of the leopard, and the brute force of the bear, and the magnificence and the power and the wisdom of the noble lion, so grand according to natural development, yet ever bearing on its face the broken number of man's incomplete development, just falling short of the divine ideal. Six in the units, six in the tens, six in the hundreds; aye, six for ever; never, by the power of natural wisdom or human organization, rising up to the glory of the manhood of CHRIST, the sevenfold perfection of those who believe in GOD the HOLY GHOST.

What is the result? Sin finds us out; for GOD is true. As surely as the spirit of the Baptist rose up to avenge itself upon the troubled conscience of Herod, so the Church, and every branch of the Church, must sooner or later echo the eternal anthem, "Holy, Holy,

Holy, LORD GOD Almighty.” And this is the reason why the great company that Ezekiel saw has been brought up against the Bride of the LORD ; this is why she lies with the sharp stones falling around her, and every newspaper seems justified in heaping opprobrium upon her ; it is because GOD had said, “ Stone her, stone her, stone her, that her sins may be brought to remembrance,” that she may learn the folly of leaning on the arm of flesh, and trusting to the power of this present world. This is the meaning of all our misfortunes.

Let me now utter, in the Name of the LORD, the conclusion of the whole matter. There is hope in our latter end ; hope drawn from the character of GOD ; hope shadowed forth in this glorious chapter. We all know the magnificent results of that long Babylonish captivity. It is not true that the Jews in Babylon learnt the doctrine of the Resurrection, any more than we in this generation have learnt the meaning of the Acts of the Apostles. But it is true that that which was old became new, through the suffering and loneliness of the great Babylonish struggle. It was while sitting by the waters of Babylon, when men’s hearts were failing them for fear, that the Almighty GOD gave a keener perception of the resurrection-life, and of the great company of angels, and of the abominable sin of idolatry, and the wickedness of all spiritual adultery. It is in the Psalm of the Return that we find the children of GOD rejoicing in the power of GOD’s holy Word, which liveth and endureth for ever. It was in those days that Daniel was allowed to see the vision of the “ stone ”—the very symbol of all that speaks of the natural man, so cold and dead and utterly incapable of being revived. It was by the sorrow and trouble at Babylon that men’s eyes were purified to see and to believe in that Living GOD, Who

could shape the dull stone, and make it full of divine life, so that before it the very oracles of heathendom should be silenced, and the magnificent towers and palaces of imperial Rome be crumbled into the dust.

So, my brethren, beloved in CHRIST, we recall the words of hope with which this chapter concludes : “ Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth . . . I will establish My covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD : that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD GOD.” We thank GOD, and take courage. Yes, we thank GOD for the eternal counsels by which our Church has been called to this high estate. We thank Him for the awful purifying through which we are now passing, in this England of ours. Delivered from unbelief, and the curse which falls on all who depend upon the arm of flesh, we send forth our brethren in the Name of the LORD, to follow Him Who is invisible, yet truly going before them, conquering and to conquer. You of Nassau go to a land where you will have ever near to you the spirit of one of the truest and purest soldiers of the Cross : one of the great band of unknown martyrs who, because he believed in the eternal kingdom, was content to be silent in the earth that passeth away. You, my brother of Queensland, go out to that poor diocese with an income less than what is squandered in a night in one of London’s extravagancies ; you go out to a diocese whose every need might be supplied by the savings of a single merchant in a single year ; you go out, ashamed, it may be, of the Church that can allow bishops to wander from parish to parish like ecclesiastical mendicants—ashamed of the miserable response that England has made to the good-

ness of her GOD ; but you must, my brother, go in strong faith, because you believe in the Gospel of the kingdom.

And you, my dear brother, the friend of twenty years' standing, the companion of my joys and sorrows, what shall I say to you ? Thank GOD, you know—you have been taught by the Blessed Spirit—how weak you are. You know that even for the daily strength of the body that perisheth, you have to depend upon the prayers of the Church, and upon the mercy of GOD, the Giver of life. You go forth with power, because you are weak—because you are the youngest, like David, in the house of your fathers ; you will go as the messenger of the priests of GOD in England ; you will draw the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers ; you will tell our Fathers in GOD that two years of prayer have made a mighty difference in the position of the English Church, a mighty difference in the relation which once existed between the clergy and the bishops. You will tell them that their intercessions have been indeed answered ; that the priests of GOD desire in very deed to strengthen instead of to weaken the hands of their rulers. You will tell them that we ask for the exercise of the spiritual power of their high office ; that we desire, not to be persuaded and argued with, but to be commanded, in the Name of the GOD that dwelleth in them, so that the glory of the LORD may be revealed, and the Gospel of His kingdom published ; that priests and people, deacons and laity, men, women, and children, some by working, some by suffering, some by dying, may advance the glory of the LORD, and plant in this fair world of ours the banner of the Crucified, the symbol of the Gospel of the kingdom.

II

FILIAL LOVE AND FEAR¹

“*When ye pray, say, Our Father.*”

S. LUKE xi. 2.

MY brethren, if we were asked to express the substance of CHRIST'S revelation we should answer in the words which we have selected for our text. They contain the great feature which distinguishes Christianity from all previous dispensations. The god of the heathen was regarded as an intelligent ruler of the universe, careless of the happiness of his creatures, and unmoved by their sorrows. The GOD of the Jews was a high and holy Being Whose face no one had ever beheld, Who spake to His people amid the thunders of Sinai as He stood upon the mountain which burned with fire. Even though a dim idea of the paternal character of GOD the Deity might sometimes be conceived, it was only to the bereaved and despairing sufferers that He was so revealed. It was only when their natural parents had deserted them that their very misery obliged them to believe in the existence of a spiritual FATHER. “Doubtless Thou art our FATHER, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.” Even then it was only the favoured descendants of Abraham, only those who belonged to the family of Israel, who had every right to be called the children of GOD. When, however,

¹ The first Sermon, when Curate of S. Mary Abbots, Kensington, preached June 14, 1857. See *Memoir*, edited by A. J. Mason, D.D., I. p. 35.

the light of nature had failed in producing sufficient motives for holiness, when fear had proved to be unable to make men good, JESUS CHRIST was sent into the world, that by unfolding the Divine nature more fully He might give to mankind and men a higher motive of action.

He told mankind that GOD was their FATHER, and that they were His children; they were rebellious, separated from their FATHER by sin, continually fighting His mighty arm, yet still they were children. They were prodigals whose substance was wasted, whose FATHER was forgotten, yet notwithstanding they were beloved by the FATHER Whom they had dishonoured. He loved them while they were yet in their sins, He wished to bring them back to their long-deserted home. He longed to say of each one of them, "This My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"—not merely yourself, righteous Pharisee, or Jew, proud of his privileges as a member of the true Church—but the publicans and the harlots, the very Gentiles who sat in darkness, and worshipped their blocks of wood and stone—all, without any distinction, were now declared to be the children of one common FATHER.

Yet this was not the whole of the great truth JESUS made known to men. He proceeded to show them how He had come, not merely to reveal, but to accomplish the will of His FATHER. By becoming Man, He united all men to GOD.

As the Representative of humanity, He confessed the sin of humanity in rebelling against its FATHER, and offered a full atonement for the sins of the whole world. Finally He gave us His HOLY SPIRIT to teach us the high privileges which He had procured for us. He sent Him to tell each one of us of our new inheritance, to bid each one of us no more to rebel against our reconciled FATHER, to help each one of us in our conflicts with the

enemies of our souls, to make us not merely in name, but in very truth, the followers of GOD as dear children. Were we not right in saying that "our FATHER" is the key-note of the New Testament?

It was the FATHER's love which gave His SON to be the Atonement for our sins—it is because we are sons that He hath sent forth the Spirit of His SON into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, FATHER." In reliance then upon the same Spirit, let us try to derive some of the instruction which these words are so well fitted to convey. With this view let us examine, firstly, what is implied in the title, "Our FATHER"; let us consider, secondly, the duties which it imposes upon ourselves.

It is clearly revealed that GOD is your FATHER; He is the FATHER of all men, not merely as their Creator, but as being the FATHER of that Saviour Who, by taking our nature upon Him, has become the Representative of all mankind. GOD sent forth His SON to redeem or to buy back from their state of slavery, not one or two favoured individuals, but the whole human race; not merely those who were near, but those who were far off; not only those who were the children of Abraham, but those who were strangers and foreigners, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. As by the offence of one, judgement came upon all, so by the righteousness of One the free gift was given unto all men. Do we find it difficult to receive this truth, my brethren? Are we unable to believe that those who have never known the Name of GOD are really His children?

Let us look for a moment at that human relation by which GOD has chosen to express this great truth. Let us imagine the case of children who have never seen their earthly parent. Educated among strangers, living in the country of an enemy, they may have never even heard his name. Yet this ignorance would not destroy their

relationship to this unknown father, the fact would remain the same however unproductive it might be of any change in their life ; nay, we might even conceive the voice of natural affection to be hushed in these children. We can imagine them too happy in their present life to have any desire to return, or accept their father's invitation to a home of whose pleasures they were ignorant. Still he whose love had been thus manifested would not on account of their ingratitude the less continue to be their father.

So it is with ourselves, my brethren, in our relation to GOD. We may be living under the dominion of His great enemy the devil. We may disbelieve the revelation of the FATHER Which JESUS CHRIST has made. We may resist the Spirit which He has given us, and in spite of all our high privileges remain careless or rebellious. Still we cannot cease to be His children. Let us think well of this, for it is an awful truth. While to the penitent it is most comforting, it is a dreadful aggravation to the guilt of a sinner. There is no sight on earth more terrible than that of a son whose ingratitude has requited a father's love with rebellious disobedience. Even the most abandoned would feel a pang of remorse at being estranged from their father. How awful therefore is the condition of one who has thrown off his obedience to his heavenly FATHER, has refused to acknowledge his relationship to GOD. Oh, if one thought more than another will add to the intensity to the cry of anguish which will arise hereafter from the lost spirits in hell, it will be the recollection of that FATHER Whose voice of love they have so often rejected upon earth !

This consideration brings us to the next fact, which we gather from the title by which GOD has chosen to reveal Himself, the foundation of His government, the

principle by which it is regulated. What is the first idea which arises on the name of father being mentioned in our hearing? Do we picture to ourselves one who is willing to punish, or a person who is severe in the distribution of justice? All these qualities, indeed, are found in any father who executes aright the solemn trust that has been committed to him. Yet love is the grand thought which the word itself presents to our mind. So is it in your spiritual kingdom.

GOD indeed is "just, and rendereth to every man according to his deeds." He will in no wise clear the guilty, and visits with everlasting punishment those who rebel against Him. Yet He wishes to be worshipped by us, not as the consuming fire whose fury must be quenched, but as the loving FATHER Whose arms are extended to receive all who will come to Him through JESUS CHRIST. It was love which made Him send forth His blessed SON to recall us to our long-forgotten home. It is love which permits no past sin, no present unworthiness to separate Him from His children. It is love which is ever showering fresh mercies upon us, and removes the difficulties which appeared like mountains to be obstructing our progress. Even if correction be needed to subdue our stubborn wills, still it is by a FATHER'S hand that the punishment is inflicted. "Whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Our GOD is Love. We then proceed to consider, in the second place, the practical effects which this paternal character of GOD should produce upon ourselves. It should make us come boldly to the throne of grace. Let us ever hold fast this great truth that GOD is our FATHER. He has not only created us but has bought us back from that state of slavery into which we had voluntarily sold ourselves. By uniting us with CHRIST

He has made us His adopted and reconciled children. Let us beware of disbelieving this first principle of our religion. Who would not be amazed at the folly of that man who refused to receive the offers of a parent's love, because he was not certain that such a relation existed between them? Who would not despise his weakness, if, instead of enjoying the comforts of a father's home, he were consuming the best part of his life in searching for proofs of his right to the title of a son. In like manner, let us not waste our strength in searching for proofs of our right to expect God's love. These we shall never find, so we had better abandon our fruitless search. Let us not spend our time in morbid inquiries whether we are amongst the happy number of those who can appropriate the privileges of the Gospel. Let us rather take our stand upon its own blessed words, "Ye are all the children of GOD through faith in JESUS CHRIST." Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, never doubting the love of Him Who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, so shall we find grace to help, and strength to support us in every time of need.

Again, let us hold fast this our confidence even unto the end, however severe may be the trials by which we are beset. If our favourite plans are thwarted, if that to which we have looked forward for years has been denied to us, if those who were dearer than our own life have been removed from our sight, still let us never forget that it is a FATHER'S love which has inflicted this chastisement upon us. It is He Who has stripped us of all our earthly covering that in our nakedness we might return to Him. It is He Who has deprived us of earthly friends, that we might find in Himself a Friend Who sticketh closer than a brother. Yes, my Christian brother, let us hold fast this confidence in that trial which is the greatest that God can inflict upon us.

When we lose all sense of our FATHER'S Presence, when words appear to have no meaning, when religion seems like a dream, when we almost wish that our eternity had never been revealed to us, and when in this deep darkness the cry of the Saviour rises to our lips, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" then let the thought that we are GOD'S children be like a star to tell us of the approach of that SON for Whom we are longing. Though we cannot see GOD, still let us hold fast our confidence in His love, though the trial be bitter, and bitter indeed it is, still let us say with our Saviour, "The cup which my FATHER hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Again, let us hold fast this confidence even when we have sinned most grievously. There are times in the lives of many of us when sin after sin arises to condemn us. We see perhaps a frivolous life frittered away in foolish enjoyments, or a still darker picture may arise, sins more gross and deadly may seem to separate us from GOD. We think that repentance may be of use to others, but that against ourselves the door of mercy must now be closed for ever. We can imagine that forgiveness might be bestowed upon the thief even in his expiring moments. We cannot believe that for us, who after knowing our privileges as Christians, after experiencing the love of our FATHER, have again fallen into sin, any place of repentance can be found.

We think that nothing remains for us but a fearful anticipation of the punishment which we have justly deserved. My brother, such sins are indeed terrible, yet the very wish for amendment which GOD has given is a proof that His mercy is not yet exhausted.

If it were merely a judge with whom we had to deal, then the remembrance of past wickedness, and the consciousness of present guilt might indeed prevent us from

approaching him. Yet how can such fears have any place, when it is our FATHER Who is praying us to return. Who of you who are fathers would hesitate to receive a penitent son however grievously he might have sinned against you? Who of you who are children would not return to an earthly parent? If we then, with all our human weakness, still feel the tie which unites a father and his child to be so strong, how can we distrust the far more perfect love of our heavenly FATHER? However grievous, therefore, our sin may be, still let us not add the greater sin of distrusting our FATHER's love. The past, indeed, with all its follies and all its sins, cannot be recalled—the future, however, is still before us. Our FATHER will receive even the tottering forms of those whose strength has been consumed in the service of sin. Arise, then, let us be going! Let us sit no longer in bitter despair. Let us go to our FATHER. He Who forgave the sinful Magdalene because she loved much will forgive our sins, however grievous they may have been. He Who sent the first message of love to the Apostle who had denied Him will anticipate the words of penitence which our lips refuse to utter. He will say to us as He said to David after one of the darkest crimes which the Bible has recorded, "The LORD hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." Another result of the paternal character of GOD should be manifested in the freedom of the service which we render to Him. My son, give Me thy heart, is GOD's demand from each one of us. Give me of Thy free Spirit, is the answer of every loving son.

Hence the hope of reward and the fear of punishment are parts of the spirit of bondage from which we have been redeemed. It is not the tortures of hell and the joys of heaven which should have the greatest influence upon our lives. These, indeed, are powerful

motives in arousing the sinner from his careless slumber. The Christian, however, will fear separation from GOD and ingratitude to a loving FATHER more than all the torments which are reserved for the impenitent. He will abstain from evil not that he may gain heaven, but that he may be like unto his FATHER Who is in heaven. He will be holy because the GOD Whom he loves, the GOD Who has called him, is holy.

Oh, my brethren, how much higher would be the standard of our Christianity if this free spirit were the principle of our lives. We should not then be inquiring how much of Sunday might be devoted to ourselves without incurring GOD's wrath. We should not then be trying how much of the world's pleasures might be enjoyed without forfeiting our eternal happiness. As a child by loving obedience learns the will of its parent, so we should know almost instinctively what our FATHER would have us to do. We should not merely observe but enjoy our Sunday. We should shun the vanities of the world, not because they are forbidden, but because the happiness of our union with GOD is weakened by indulgence in them, because the warmth of our love to our FATHER is chilled by their deadening influence.

Lastly, the paternal character of GOD cuts at the root of all Pharisaical ideas of our own superiority. If GOD be our FATHER, then we all are brethren. Yes, brethren, that outcast in the street is our brother, that wretched being whose very name we shrink from mentioning is our sister. Sinful and rebellious though they be, they are GOD's children. Let then the unkind judgement be hushed lest our self-sufficient pride cast a stumbling-block in the way of one for whom CHRIST died. We are all the children of GOD, high and low, rich and poor : we are all brethren.

Let us then, as brethren, each bear our burdens, and exercise forbearance one towards another. Let the poor no longer indulge in murmuring against the rich, but make due allowances for the temptations to selfishness by which they are surrounded. Let the rich speak tenderly of his poorer brother, and remember how sore are the trials to which he is exposed. In fact in everything let us strive to realize the great truth that we are all the children of one common FATHER. Let the result of our belief be seen in the love which we manifest towards all our brethren. Yet how imperfect are all our ideas of GOD! How feeble are all our efforts to obey the will of our heavenly FATHER! Let us pray for an increase of that loving obedience to which alone the knowledge of GOD is vouchsafed. Let us pray for more of that childlike spirit which was seen in every act of our Saviour's life. It is only by union with Him that we can obey, or even understand the will of GOD. "No man knoweth the FATHER save the SON, and He to Whom the SON will reveal Him." And He will reveal Him to each one of us if we cherish the gracious influences of His Spirit. He will be a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths. He will bring us nearer and nearer to GOD till at last the veil which now separates the FATHER from His children shall be rent for ever. Then shall we see Him, Whom now having not seen we love, in Whom though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We shall see Him not by the dim and flickering light of human symbols and human relations, but face to face. As the FATHER hath ever known His children, so will the children then know the FATHER. We shall see Him as He is. We shall know Him even as also we are known.

Thus we have tried to illustrate the great truth

that GOD is the FATHER of all men. We have shown that to each one of us all the blessings which a FATHER can bestow have been freely offered. We have seen the effect which this should produce upon our lives. We have seen that as children we should come with childlike confidence to our FATHER'S throne. We have seen that as children of one common FATHER we should show by our love to the brethren that we remember Him Who is their FATHER and our FATHER, Who is their GOD and our GOD.

III

A NEW THING¹

“Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?”—ISA. xliiii. 18, 19.

WE have endeavoured, my brethren, to brace our wills by gazing for a while steadfastly upon the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity. We have contemplated God the Eternal calmly surveying past, present, future, providing for every emergency, calculating on the loss of strength and power that would result from the weakness and negligence of His agents; calculating for the triumphs of the devil, the victories of the world, the self-willed rebellion of human beings; calculating for every emergency—I repeat the words, if one may use human language—and so ordering it that everything, good and bad, shall be made to work together—like the varied-coloured threads in some divine tapestry—for the manifestation before men and angels of the manifold wisdom of God. This may come through development, or, it may be, after a long protracted struggle. All is naked and open in the sight of Him with Whom we have to deal: the LORD of our life and the GOD of our salvation, the Eternal One, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

¹ S. Andrew's Day: the Day of Intercession for Foreign Missions, 1877.

We see in the next place that Almighty GOD reveals to each age, each nation, each individual, a definite portion of His truth, to be received at that particular time ; a definite portion of His holy will to be accomplished in that particular age ; the work, in fact, that He has prepared that we should walk in. He says to each succeeding age, "The work of the last generation is not necessarily the work for you. Remember the former things to gather encouragement and wisdom and holy courage for the future." But the old order changeth, and GOD fulfils Himself in many ways. "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing ; it shall spring forth."

And this is illustrated in the Bible history, and the history of the Church at large ; in the history of our own Church, in the development of different truths in this England of ours, in the individual life of saints, martyrs, confessors, down to our own personal experience.

I desire to carry on this subject now, and to illustrate, by the help of the HOLY GHOST, given in answer to the prayers of His Church, the thought which is suggested in my opening remarks. "Almighty GOD alloweth man in His own Divine wisdom": Almighty GOD allows man to hinder this work of His, to delay it by want of prayer, by want of obedience, by want of reverent watching the signs of the times, by internal divisions and backbiting, by limiting the power of GOD through unbelief, and by manifold forms of self-will. The bride of CHRIST, the Church, has the power of wounding her LORD, and delaying that day when He shall see of the travail of His Soul and be satisfied.

One of the most subtle forms of self-will is especially brought before us by the subject that we have been considering. It takes the form of limiting the will of

GOD, limiting the power of the Holy One. It is a strange device of Satan by which he accomplishes that fiendish work in which he most delights. One of the ways in which he can (so to speak) parody the power of GOD in bringing good out of evil is by turning GOD's very blessings into a curse. It is for the time only, through GOD's own permission, but the mystery of iniquity worketh yet, and will work till GOD sees fit to stop it—making the very blessings of the power and love of GOD into instruments against Himself.

Try to follow what I mean. Almighty GOD blessed the Church at large in the past, and that blessing Satan makes an hindrance to progress; he makes it the means by which the Church holds back and refuses to do the work of her own generation, or to receive the truth which is specially bestowed upon the age in which she is then living.

Observe that first in the Bible. GOD was saying, "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old; I am creating a new thing." How did the people take it? They said, "We remember the old covenant; we know GOD spake by Moses; we know that the Tabernacle was of GOD's devising; we know that the law came by the ministry of angels; we know that GOD blessed the old Mosaic dispensation; but as for this JESUS we know not whence He is, let Him be crucified!"

Even the communicants (as we should say) erred in the same way. They knew that John was a prophet. They knew that that lonely preacher of repentance standing by the side of the Jordan had had his work attested emphatically by the Living GOD. So they refused to accept the new revelation of the liberty of the Gospel. "John's disciples," they said to CHRIST, "fasted; Your disciples are eating and drinking; You cannot be a true

Teacher?" The very goodness of GOD in the days of the Baptist was made the means of defeating the blessings the same GOD was ready to bestow through the Incarnate LORD. So again, in all Church history, you find the same thing going on perpetually. One generation catches a truth; GOD gives a new truth in the next age. "Impossible!" they say, "it conflicts with the past, and we know the past was from GOD." Yet GOD is saying, "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old; behold, I will do a new thing."

So especially is it in our own Church of England. Of course, to intelligent people I need not say that it does not follow, because a thing is new that therefore it is true:

"Old things need not be therefore true,
O brother-man, nor yet the new!"

"Consider it again!" But the new fancy that differs from the old truth is simply rubbish of man's creation.

And in the next place, if you study the history of the Church, you will see how from time to time man has turned the blessing of GOD into a curse. Especially is this the case in the Church of England. You see we are coming from the outside of the circle nearer and nearer home. Some of you will remember that essay of Lord Macaulay on *Ranke's History of the Popes*, showing the weakness of the Church of England: partly through a conservative spirit, (for which, in the right sense of the word, GOD's holy Name be praised! long may she be conservative!), partly from the national want of the perceptive faculty, or whatever it be. It is a fact that we in England have wasted and lost more of GOD's blessings, I suppose, than any other branch of the Church. It is melancholy to think of a man like Simeon suspected to his death; and a man like Dr. Pusey misunderstood for years, until at last, quite in

old age, when he comes to a Congress the whole assembly rises up to cheer him! There is something melancholy in it all, to think how GOD has been saying, "Remember not the former things," and the Church has not responded to the call. The movement at Cambridge was from GOD; and the movement at Oxford was from GOD; and yet each time the Church hung back, trembling, not merely with caution, not merely to wait and pray for guidance; but with the old idea of the Jews in the days of our LORD, "It cannot be true, because it is not exactly the same truth that was preached in the days of our forefathers."

And so coming down to our own life, how continually do we find in it illustrations of the principle we are considering! Is it not so, my brethren? We look back on some earlier period of our life and we say, "I know GOD blessed me then, I know GOD loved me, and yet I did not see this truth." As if GOD had no gradual education of man, as if GOD Himself had no further truth to impart, as if the education of the man at sixty were to be no advance upon his education at fifty, as if the position of the man at eighty and of the boy just leaving school were to be the same, as if the Eternal FATHER leaves us from childhood to old age like a pillar of salt in the wilderness, standing there as a memorial for men to gaze at!

Oh, my brethren, it is something awful, to any one who cares in the slightest degree for the glory of GOD, when he thinks how the very blessings of GOD have been turned in this way into a curse. But how often we find it so. "My father," some one says, "was a holy man, he never saw this evangelical teaching; my mother was a saint, she knew nothing of daily services and frequent Communions, and the like. This truth cannot be from GOD, or they would have known it. The light they had

was sufficient for them. My father never gave more than so much a year to the Church," and the like.

Again and again the voice of the Living God, yea, the voice of the crucified King, has come near to His own peculiar people, near to those who live in His Presence, who love His Name, who watch for His appearing, and God says, "Oh, My people, what have I done to you? Wherein have I wearied you? Why did not you open your mouth wider that I might fill it? Why were you not on the watch-tower? Why was thine eye not looking to see the signs of the times? Why was thine ear not open to hear the call to self-sacrifice?" Thy mother was a saint, and thy father was holy, and the generation of bygone Christians were holy too. But God, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, fulfils His eternal purpose in different ways in each succeeding age. God has an education for the Church, an education for the individual.

I wish now to point out how that great principle, which is of universal application, can be applied to the Foreign Mission work of the Church. Of course it applies to all our work.

I will give you a few illustrations. In bygone days the Church knew very little about Foreign Missions. And God in His love "winked at her ignorance" (to use a Bible phrase) and blessed her according to her ability and her knowledge, and so a great Bishop like Bishop Gray had that wondrous blessing which you have often, I dare say, considered, and thanked God for it, if you have read his Life. Now observe the way in which men have attempted to turn that blessing into a curse. Over and over again, in every kind of publication, you find the exact details of the way in which Bishop Gray was obliged to work held forth as a sort of type for the Church in her Foreign Missions in all succeeding ages.

So you are told that because Bishop Gray had a large diocese, the Church ought to have large dioceses now in all her new Missions ; and, because Bishop Gray was obliged, in order to obtain funds to administer his huge diocese, to spend half his life in secular cares, coming backwards and forwards to England begging, therefore we are to perpetuate the same miserable life for all succeeding Bishops.

Now, in considering this question we should endeavour to be unprejudiced, and take the Bible as our guide. I am speaking, my brethren, I fear, in what may appear to be rather a dogmatic manner, but I wish you to understand that I am only expressing what appears to me to be the truth. Of course there are numberless men, better and wiser than myself, who think differently. But my duty is to put before you as well as I can what seems to me to be true.

Now, it seems to me that if you go back to the Acts of the Apostles, if there is one principle enunciated more clearly than another, it is this : make your centre strong ; have the heart of your diocese established ; and only expand your area as God definitely calls you, from Jerusalem to Judæa, from Judæa to Samaria, and so forth. I believe that no one starting afresh, with the Acts of the Apostles for his guide, would ever think of giving an unhappy Bishop half a continent. He would give him a small see, not much more than one large town with its suburbs ; and he would give him a large staff to pray together and develop the spiritual life. Then as God blessed him and his work, the circles would enlarge around the centre ; just as in old Roman days, they took the sacred fire to light each new hearth where the god of their fatherland was to be worshipped. The fire will spread, it must spread, if it comes down from God. There is an instance in which God's mercy in giving a

certain amount of blessing in the last generation is turned against Himself as an excuse for carrying on a weak system.

So again, many noble men, like Henry Martyn, have done great work for God as isolated workers. And so Society after Society sends an unhappy man far away from friends, without perhaps even a companion, with nobody to pray with, nobody to keep his spirits from drooping, utterly ignoring God's divine principle that it is not good for a man to be alone ; simply because God blessed some one who was alone a hundred years ago ! And therefore, for the mere nonsense of having a large area covered with a number of missionary posts that we can show are to a certain extent filled, a poor man is left to wear out and decay, body, soul, and spirit, and the Church is dishonoured by the lowered tone of the man who is left without the Sacraments of his Church and without the fellowship of the saints. There is another illustration.

If you survey all the varied details of Foreign Mission work, you will continually find this argument used, "It did very well in the past, why alter it?" This principle fully carried out would derive evil from the example of the holiest men ; and the very memory of a great saint like Bishop Wilberforce might be turned into a curse. Men will tell you, because that mighty giant in the spiritual life did not see a truth twenty years ago, therefore God cannot reveal it to our children ; and so forth.

The whole question of religious education in India illustrates what I mean. It was not possible probably in former years not to mingle the Christians with the heathen ; it was probably a necessity then to have non-Christian teachers. But now, when the Church's conscience is aroused, and we know the difference (as

the early Christians did) between being in the kingdom and out of the kingdom. It is mere profanation of our holy mysteries to teach a heathen child (as he is taught now) the Bible, and to let him compete for Bible prizes, and yet remain a heathen all the time. It is simply causing the Bible to be laughed at. Of course every now and then men were converted under this system, for GOD'S Word carried a blessing with it in spite of the bad system, and the poor ignorant children taught in this way did now and then, aye! in many cases, through GOD'S infinite mercy, afterwards come to believe in CHRIST. But half the infidelity in England (so I am informed by those who have thoroughly studied the subject) can be traced to the fact that we have tossed our Christianity in that way into the middle of heathen children. We have taught them to look upon the Bible as a thing they can learn without ever having been baptized at all; and that the Christian doctrine belongs to those outside the fold just as much as those within it. And the result is obvious.

If there is no difference between being in the Church of CHRIST and outside, why should they sacrifice everything for CHRIST, and part with home and friends and almost life itself, like that young lad we read of who sacrificed everything and was dragged back three or four times (I forget which) by his parents, for aught he knew to death, and yet stood forth true to CHRIST and His Cross? Why should they do this if there is no deeper meaning in the grand old truths of the FATHER and the SON and the HOLY GHOST? If the Church is nothing—and they have a fellowship in their caste, they have a society amongst themselves—if the Church is nothing, why should they part with that which they have for a mere figment, an idle dream of a disordered fancy?

My brethren, there are hundreds of other instances I

doubt not, but I have only mentioned two or three that press most heavily upon me almost every time I go to a Committee about Foreign Missions. In all cases alike the old difficulty arises, "GOD blest us in the last generation, therefore what more can you want? Why cannot you go on in the old road?" Of course there is a true side to it. The old paths of the Church in one sense never alter. They are the same as they were at the beginning, and will remain the same to the day when the LORD shall come back again in His glory; which day may He in His infinite mercy hasten! But that is not what people mean. It is an idle, self-satisfied praising of ourselves for what we have learned; and a dislike to learn any new truth that affects the Church at large. The cause is plain enough. It is plain enough, my brethren, what it all springs from, dishonouring God the HOLY SPIRIT, as if GOD had only one idea, only one great thought, and that we had "attained" to it; utterly ignoring the great truth that even in old days they learned, "I see that all human things come to an end, but Thy commandment"—the great principle of Thy kingdom—"is exceeding broad," taking generations yet unborn fully to develop it.

My brethren, if we are Christians and really mean what we so often say, all of us have long ago given up ourselves and all we possess to our LORD's disposal. It is the meaning of our Baptism; we ratified it at Confirmation; we never come to the Holy Table without saying, often in words but always in deed, "Here I give to Thee myself, body, soul, spirit, to be a reasonable, holy, lively sacrifice." We all know what was done with sacrifices in the Old Testament. Therefore, my brethren, on this day we do not come to surrender ourselves to CHRIST. Unless we are all simply humbugs—I wish to speak plainly, and no other

word expresses my meaning—unless we are walking in a vain shadow, and insulting GOD consciously or unconsciously, by mere words, we have given up ourselves to Him. We have told Him that all we have belongs to Him, all our money, all our children, everything. We know it ; we assert it ; all of you say so ; there is no one who would not admit it. You know it perfectly well, and you see just as clearly as I do, that if the LORD made it clear to you this year that you were to give up all your money, you would be obliged to do it. You dare not refuse ; holy fear would prevent it, if you were sure the LORD meant you to do so. If the LORD told you not to keep even one child at home, and you were quite clear about it, of course you would do it. Any of you would, as you have given up yourselves to CHRIST. That is the meaning of being Christians, belonging to CHRIST. The Baptismal Service, the Confirmation Service, the Communion Service, all take this for granted. If our LORD told any of you (dearly as we all love our home and our Church) to go out to the uttermost parts of the earth, merely that you might die, that your blood might be (like that of the martyrs) the seed of the Church, you would go, any of you, you could not help it. You could not even come to a Communion afterwards, if the LORD had told you to go : you must go.

Therefore we are not here to make a new surrender of ourselves to-day. All we are here for is this—to remind ourselves of the fact, and then to apply the fact to the special subject about which we are interceding to-day.

We belong to our LORD. What we are to do is to go on the watch-tower, and to ask Him whether He has any new teaching to give us, any new revelation ; whether He requires of us, for example, more money than we have given, or more time for intercession for Foreign Missions, or more definite training of any of

our boys or girls for the work. Suppose He has a new truth to teach us, we must accept it; or if He has some new sacrifice that He wants to ask, it will have to be made, you know.

Thank GOD that we belong to CHRIST; that we dwell in CHRIST and CHRIST in us; that we are members of CHRIST. It is no use worrying our minds with long speculations as to what possibly may come to us, or when we shall die; that is waste of time. We have only to live from day to day for the day. That is the law of the kingdom; to-morrow belongs to GOD.

But we might just at present look and see whether we are really giving as much money as we ought in this great crisis of the Church's history, when GOD has answered the prayers of years, and asks definitely for a large sum. We can look it all over; only, my brethren, it is not with man that we are dealing; it is with the Living GOD. The Judge is before the door: He only knows into which house He will first enter to take an account of His servants.

Thank GOD that He has taught you that you belong entirely to Him. Only to-day pray for yourselves, pray for your Church, that you may never turn past blessing into a curse for the future; that you may not be among those who will be found in the day of the LORD's appearing as souls that did run well, that did respond with all their hearts once to the Divine call, and then slumbered and slept.

IV

THE BLESSED SAINTS

“Lo, a great multitude.”

REV. vii. 9.

IN our great Universities, my brethren, every year we have a special service in which we commemorate the wise and the munificent, the pure and the saintly, who have laid the foundations of those time-honoured institutions, or helped, by their love, their bounty, and their fostering care, to rear them in all their fair proportions.

Even so, from the earliest days, the Church has deepened her faith, and strengthened her hope, and tried to fire, with the enthusiasm of a divine love, the hearts of her children, by commemorating not merely the leaders of the saintly band, the great Apostles and founders of Christianity, but the vast company of the saints: the multitude, of whom to-day's Epistle¹ speaks, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, who stand (or shall stand) before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, “Salvation to our God Which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

In olden days, when the Church was small, the names of these great heroes were mentioned aloud, as if they were being summoned out of their quiet rest, summoned to take their place at the great sacramental

¹ All Saints' Day.

feast. Aloud the thanksgivings were uttered. One by one, like costly treasures, they were taken out from the great invisible treasure-house, then given back to the keeping of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

My brethren, what a glorious heritage it is of which you and I have been made partakers! Let us, before the festival has closed, read aloud the beginning of the long list given to us to-day by the Church in that marvellous chapter, that wondrous inspiration of God the HOLY SPIRIT: the long list, commencing with righteous Abel, who through faith offered unto God the more excellent sacrifice; reaching on through the mighty crowd, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight (the very women receiving their dead raised to life again) by their faith; stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword; destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; the great cloud of witnesses by which we are even now encompassed.

Then let us pass on in thought down the long line of generations then unborn, who, by considering JESUS CHRIST (*Heb.* xii. 3) were saved from yielding to the power of the world or the flesh or the devil.

Let us think for a moment of righteous Polycarp. It is an old story now, how he received the tidings, suddenly communicated, with the simple utterance of the man who had learned to submit himself, and had been taught obedience by the things that he suffered. He was not surprised. The only reply was, "Then the will of God be done." When the offer of life was given to him on condition that he would simply speak against JESUS CHRIST, and cast a few grains of incense into the

sacrificial fire of the false god : "Eighty and six years," answered the old man, "have I served CHRIST, and He has never done me an injury ; how can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour ?" Then, as he stood there, with a face all full of peace and joy, they unrobed him, and bound him to the stake, and the flames began to rise ; and the words with which his last solemn prayer ended were the words that you and I have used at our Eucharistic Feast this morning : "I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, my FATHER, with the Eternal JESUS CHRIST, Thy beloved SON, to Whom with Thee and the HOLY SPIRIT be glory now and for ever."

Then let us think—and if we have never read the annals of the Church, let us begin to-day—let us think of Blandina and Sanctus, Maturus and Attalus, of Perpetua and Felicitas, right on to Cyprian, the glory of the African Church. You remember, some of you, the answer that he made to their offer of mercy—for they loved the man, in spite of his religion—"Sacrifice to the false gods!"—"I will not!"—"Consider well ; thy life is at stake."—"The case needs no consideration."—"Then, thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood."—"GOD be thanked !"

Who can rightly unroll this long memorial of the Church's heroes ? Carry on your thoughts, brethren, down succeeding ages. Think of the names inscribed on the poorest Christian's pedigree. Think of them, counting all things but loss, that they might win CHRIST. Think of them, enduring all things, that they might fill up that which was behind of the sufferings of their LORD for His Body the Church. Think of the shame, the taunts, the revilings, the hunger, the nakedness, the bonds, the dungeons, the scourges, the tortures ; the bodies given up at last to be burned, the necks meekly bowed beneath the sword of the destroyer.

It is a great multitude, thank GOD!—a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, who were beheld by the Apostle standing before the Throne and before the Lamb.

So, from mediæval darkness, look on through ages of twilight (no age so dark as not to find a saint or a martyr); no age so glittering in this world's glory as not to count it the highest honour to sacrifice its children to the Crucified; until the history of the days in which your own lot is cast. Recall the faces not merely of martyrs but of saints; not merely of heroes, but of the rank and file; not merely of clergy, but of laity in the spiritual army; not merely of men, but of women and little children; yes, little ones, borne away before the burden and the heat of the day, gathered by the Good Shepherd into the quiet resting-place.

My brethren, try to rise to-day, thinking awhile not merely of grand men like Bishop Patteson and Bishop Mackenzie and Bishop Field, but thinking of the numbers whom you yourselves have known. Think how many in this great London have laid down their life at home to watch at the couch of loathsome sickness or of slow decay, or struggled with a burden not their own until their life-springs wore away. See them there, as they rise before you, one by one: quiet lives, it may be, they led on earth—hidden with CHRIST in GOD; lives of which the glory and the power were known only unto GOD, or to the few—it might be, only to the one—to whom the life on earth was in CHRIST devoted.

My brethren, is there not strength for us, as we think of these glorious pictures which the Blessed Spirit is drawing for us to-day, as He brings them out from the old treasure-house of the Church's memory?

How ready we are, when we realize it, to do the will of GOD, and to carry any cross, if only we can be counted worthy to follow them, as they followed CHRIST! Does it not give us strength to be humble? How ready we feel, on such a day as this, to recognize all earthly distinctions; to submit gladly to any who are over us on earth, to give all honour to those to whom honour is due! How strong we feel, in the consciousness of our own glorious position, to show all fitting respect to those to whom respect is due!

How strong we feel just now to accept any life that GOD may give us; to count nothing trifling, nothing unworthy of the Christian warfare! How ready we are to be girded by another, and led anywhere that JESUS CHRIST may lead us; not to ask for the glittering of a life that shall be written in the annals of our country's history, but willing to perform that trivial round, and that common task, which shall bind us more closely to the Crucified, and make us more worthy to join with the saints and the martyrs and the confessors, the godly men and women who have passed already to their rest!

And how strong it makes us to bestow love on all with whom we are brought in contact! When we realize what a magnificent heritage we have received; when we know that away from the noise and the clamour of the outer life we have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; that GOD is our FATHER, and JESUS our Elder Brother, and the Loving Spirit our tenderest Friend; and all the noblest and best that have ever lived on earth, our companions, our fellow-soldiers, members of the one Body, heirs of the same hope, joined with us for life and for death and for all eternity; does it not make us tender with others, even while we pity them? As for lost blessing that they are trampling under foot, as they seek so eagerly for the earthly treasure that

passes away ; and spend all the strength of their life on the earthly homes from which they may be parted before the morrow's dawn. Ought it not, my brethren, to make us very tender and loving and full of kindness to all the young, to all who are trying to find their joy in this life ; full of compassion for them, but very tender and very forbearing ? Does it not make us strong to fight, and to hope, and to persevere even to the end, resolved never to give up our trust in JESUS CHRIST ? Does it not all seem so easy, as we recall the deeds of the holy martyrs, from righteous Abel down to the last saint whom we ourselves have known and loved ?

They were all, you know, tried as we are tried, tempted as we are tempted. The little fretting circumstances, the "frequent disturbing changes"—they had them just as we have. Their white robes were often worn and stained in travel. They were weak and faltering ; they had their burdens, their hindrances, their times of slumber and weariness, their failures, their faults, like ourselves, even as we have. Does it not give us strength ? Is not All Saints' Day a glorious beginning for the battle which we have to fight this winter, in GOD'S Name, with the invisible hosts that are watching for our fall ? Does it not strengthen us with a Divine enthusiasm, to try and win a few more souls who shall be added to the glorious company ; that we may not meet them with withered flowers and empty hands, merely dragged into heaven, without anything to lay at the feet of the King Whom they love and adore ?

Only, my brethren, remember that life is not easy. Thank GOD, He has given us our Church, with her Celebrations and her uplifting Services of Prayer and Praise ; thank GOD for it all. But still, I repeat the

words, life is not easy. You know this; you have found it out for yourselves. When people lifted up their hands and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps that Thou hast sucked," our LORD said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of GOD, and keep it." If He had heard crowds of people singing hymns of praise to Him, He would probably have said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments; obedience is better than sacrifice." You remember how our LORD never ignored the facts of life. And the Church never ignores them. How practical is the conclusion of her collect, "Give us grace so to follow Thy blessed saints." Their life, remember, was a hard life. And it will be a hard life for us also, whether we spend it at home or in Africa. It is a hard battle with the world and the flesh and the devil; there are trials to be borne, pleasures to be given up, temptations to be endured.

"Give us grace to follow them in all virtuous and godly living"; doing our duty to GOD, and our duty to our neighbour. That is the point. All these saints, whatever the outward circumstances were amid which their lives were spent, are true. They had every night to confess their sins; but they were honest. They had made up their mind, by GOD's help, to do what was right. Polycarp and Cyprian were only instances of what every saint of GOD has to do, on a smaller scale. "It does not require consideration." "GOD's will be done."

So it must be with you and me. Two lives, two worlds, two kingdoms are set before us. The question is simply this: Shall all the glory and joy of this Communion of Saints be ours, through the might of the HOLY SPIRIT? No seeking or feeling, nothing but the Presence of GOD the Blessed Spirit will

bring it in answer to our prayers, and the honest surrender of our wills. Shall this Communion of Saints be ours, to lift us up, so that our life shall be spent in the power of the New Jerusalem, the invisible Kingdom? There, on the one side of us, is the world that we can see—I need not describe it to you—with all its pleasures and popularities, with so much that is really fascinating, especially in its more refined aspects. And then there, on the other hand, is the world that we cannot see: the world to come; the city of GOD; the fellowship of the saints, the sympathy of JESUS CHRIST, the love of the FATHER, the beatific vision. Yes! we have the choice: cross and crown, or “no cross and no crown.” And that bright multitude, however diverse they may be, all “came out of great tribulation,” and followed the Lamb whithersoever He led them. They wandered away, sometimes, but they came back; and then they began again to follow the Lamb whithersoever He led them.

Some of you may have to choose between the two, when the LORD JESUS CHRIST asks you to give up the joy (and it is a real joy) of a happy home, and to live alone in life, as the solitary servant of JESUS CHRIST. The choice will be offered to you—you are free. You can stay at home with those you love, or you can go out and work for CHRIST. You must then choose between CHRIST and the world.

Or you may be one concerning whom the LORD wills that you should marry. The LORD then gives the choice, whether you will marry the first person you fancy, or whether you will begin at the beginning, as “in the LORD,” refusing to allow the heart’s love to go out, save for those who serve the same CHRIST, and are living in the fellowship of saints.

And when you are married, then again there will

be the same choice. Women join that throng (I am not now speaking of open wickedness), the popular crowd of the ordinary young married women of the present century, who walk by sight, not by faith, are very popular with men, and much seen in their society, and who appear never to have realized the glorious meaning of that holy Service which teaches us to regard the married life on earth as the outward and visible sign of the mystical union that exists between CHRIST and His Church. There again is the life of faith, and the life of sight. There is the life that is popular in London ; and there is the life of the Blessed Mother, who said, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD ; be it unto me according to thy word"—who lived quietly as a holy matron in her home, and pondered what God had said, in her heart. There are the two lives : the glitter of the world ; and the lowly life (almost unhappy some would consider it) which the Gospel for to-day pictures to us, of the "poor in spirit" ; of those who "mourn" over their want of love, want of faith and want of hope ; of the "meek" ; of those who "hunger and thirst" after righteousness ; of the "merciful" (those who are kind to dumb animals, kind to their servants, kind to everybody) ; the "pure in heart" (who will not look at nor read the immodest book, nor talk of what is evil, however much they may be laughed at for their ignorance and prudishness) ; the "pure" ; the "peacemakers" ; the persecuted followers of the Crucified.

And once more, when sorrow comes, the same choice is still offered, you can either put the trouble away, you can despise the chastening of the LORD, you can try to drown it in your work, try to banish everything which saddens you ; or you can take the cross up softly, gently, lovingly ; and when both heart and

flesh recoil, you can go to that Holy Table, and there kneel till the LORD GOD has given you (if not at the time, afterwards,) a power in which you can carry the recollection of the past, and even rejoice in the realized Communion of the Saints. In all these ways we can either live the life of faith, or the life of sight; we can live in the past and the present, or in the future; we can live, looking—like Stephen—steadfastly up into heaven, or downward, grovelling in the dust and the mire of this lower earth.

My dear brethren, does not our LORD, on such a day as this, seem to summon us, from that holy place where He fed us this morning with His blessed Body and Blood, to arise and walk in newness of life? Does He not call the holy ones of every age and every land this night to appear before us? Does He not bid each one of us to single out, as it were, the Apostle, the saint, the friend, the one, out of all the goodly company, whom we chiefly love and reverence, and never rest till we ourselves are, in our measure, following their example? And does He not appeal to us, by all the chivalry of our nature, by everything in us that is good and true and loyal, to remember that we are part of that one Body, and pledged to walk worthy of that high calling, to live as the saints lived, and fight as the saints fought, that we may die as the saints died, and reign with the saints, in the one fellowship of the life everlasting?

The column in the churchyard is not broken. It is unfinished; that is all. It is earthly-hewn, and you are not sufficiently good to complete the capital; that must be done by unseen hands within the gates of the Holy City.

Did you ever stand in some country neighbourhood on the bridge and watch the noisy gurgling stream as

it flowed at your feet? Have you never seen by the side of that river little quiet pools, unruffled, from which no sound seemed to issue, restfully there by the brink of the flowing river? And yet, both the noisy stream and the quiet water at the side were part of one and the self-same current, flowing from the same source, flowing down to the same great ocean. And if you stood long enough, the torrents it might be had gathered in the mountains, and you watched the great mass of water rolling down till at last the noisy little brook was all absorbed as the great river gathered it up, and you saw neither pool nor gurgling stream, but one calm solemn deep river flowing on, till it was lost in the far-off horizon.

My brethren, those little brooks, that noisy gurgling river, those quiet pools, all gathered up in that great rolling stream—is it not a picture?

They rest quietly; we are in the noise of the storm, and the roar of the gurgling stream, till the day that the great resurrection current shall bear us on, till we realize what we learn in God's Word, the oneness of the river that proceedeth from the Throne of God. Aye! nearer still than this. This would have been but a figure for the olden days. One of your hands may be in the dark, and another in the light; but both are part of the one body, equally linked with the one head. One branch may be in shadow, and the other in full sunshine; but both, so far as they are in the tree, are one.

Does not the LORD JESUS seem to speak to you—does He not appeal unto you by all that is noble and chivalrous in your nature, as He bids you look back upon that long list, and unroll the title-deeds of your inheritance: one faith, one Church, "one family in Him we dwell"?

Aye, and closer than that. The one hand is in the light of the invisible kingdom ; the other hand is here on earth. But both are one ; we and they ; we, burdened still in the corruptible body ; they, delivered from it all : sisters, friends, mothers, all that you love. Two hands, two branches ; still both in the Body ; one in CHRIST still ; in CHRIST, through the power of GOD's glorious Incarnation, one ! One, thank GOD ! through that which His Church has stamped for ever as part of our priceless heritage ; one, through that glorious doctrine which, by the power of the Blessed Spirit uniting you to CHRIST, shall make giants of you in your Christian warfare, the doctrine of the Communion of Saints !

V

A VISION OF CHRIST¹

“I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man.”—Rev. i. 12, 13.

SUCH, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, is the vision which was vouchsafed to the beloved Apostle ; such is the vision which every day is suggested to us as we enter our cathedral and look above the altar at that eastern window. No human pen is able to describe it, no human artist can delineate its ineffable glory. Symbols, indeed, are given us—symbols that speak of power and majesty, of love and of tenderness. “I saw one like unto the Son of Man . . . His eyes were like a flame of fire.” Like a flame of fire, burning up every deceitful thought, penetrating into the utmost secrets of the chamber of man’s inmost being, the fire that burns up all that is impure, that withers everything that is unreal. “His eyes were like a flame of fire,” flashing one intensest instinct of perfect sympathy into every troubled spirit, giving comfort to mourners, joy to the sorrowful ; the eyes as a flame of fire, lightening the dark corners of the heart ; the light, the Light of men, Who is Light of Light as well as very GOD of very GOD. “And His feet were like unto fine brass.”

¹ Preached on April 27, 1893, at the Cathedral Church of S. Ninian, Perth, at the enthronement, as the Bishop’s first public utterance in Scotland : reprinted from the *Scottish Guardian*.

Day after day, year after year, age after age, till the great warfare is accomplished and the victory won, onward and ever onward He marches, subduing beneath His feet the power of alien forces, majestic in His triumphal progress through the world that Satan has enthralled, delivering His own from the bondage of evil. "And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength"—sun which makes the difference between one day and another—that which sheds brightness and happiness over the world—that without which no vital force could exist. "The sun that shineth in his strength." O CHRIST, Revealer of Thyself to Thine own disciple in the olden days, reveal Thyself to us in this our day; manifest Thyself; let Thine eyes penetrate our hearts; let Thy Presence illuminate us in our going out and coming in, day by day and night by night, until the hour of Thy advent has arrived!

"I saw one like unto the Son of Man." It was a very critical turning-point in the life of S. John. Judged by any human standard the life of JESUS CHRIST appeared on Calvary to be a failure. Betrayed by one disciple, forsaken by all, crucified by the men whom He came to save! Was this the SON of GOD of Whom ancient prophet and seer had spoken, coming in His strength, travelling in the greatness of His might, conquering and to conquer? Out of failure the Resurrection was accomplished. And he to whom this vision was vouchsafed had asked once to drink of the cup of which his Master drank. He asked in no light spirit—no mere heart-yearning to be first of the rest of the disciples. He had asked that he might be baptized with his Master's baptism; and the prayer had been answered: not yet should he drink of "the cup that I drink of," nor with "the baptism wherewith I am baptized" should he be baptized withal. Now it came—came after days

of joy and exaltation—came after periods in which the world seemed converted, and all men seemed following CHRIST; it had come to the disciple, the beloved disciple. Let any lonely widow in this church, any poor child left fatherless and motherless, cherish this thought, as years pass onwards. To the beloved disciple the great baptism had come—into the hands of the dearest of all His followers the Incarnate God had put this cup of bitter failure.

Failure? Yes. All his schemes appeared to have been frustrated, all his aspirations to have vanished unfulfilled. The Church that he tended, the souls for which he cared, the people for whom he was ready to die—something worse than suffering, and something worse than death had come to them: heresy, unbelief, everything that would separate them from the Presence of our LORD. He had seen it. He had lived long enough to see the old dream fading away. He had lived long enough to see the sin and the wickedness. The evil sower—he could always see him with his eye—that evil sower of whom CHRIST had spoken—going forth in the track of the great Heavenly Sower, scattering the bad seed that was ripening up everywhere and in plenteous crops. Whatever his sins, whatever his unworthiness, at any rate he had tried to be true; at any rate he had tried to be brave and very courageous; at any rate he had gone where his Master told him, and done what his Master had bidden him to do. And what was the result? No flaming sword appeared to deliver him safe from his enemies; no angel's voice was heard to cheer his heavy soul; no angel's hands stretched out to deliver him from the great darkness. He knew there was a GOD; he knew a CHRIST; he knew a HOLY SPIRIT. Had all forgotten him, all? Yes, all. Disciple, beloved of thy LORD, thou art

drinking of His own cup, and thou art baptized with His own baptism. Alone, forsaken on that lonely isle of Patmos, there, with the wild waves breaking upon the rugged shore, he sat all desolate, nothing left him but faith—faith that many waters cannot quench. Then, then just when the need was sorest, then just when the dear disciple was almost losing heart, he looked up, he turned round, he heard the voice, he felt that marvellous uplifting of the HOLY SPIRIT which those who have experienced it can never forget.

“I was in the Spirit,” he says, “on the LORD’S Day, and I heard a voice, and I turned, and I saw one like unto the Son of Man.” Yes, He is there—He is there, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Yes, He is there the same—the same Whom he had known in the years of His earthly pilgrimage, Whom he had seen sitting all tired with real human tiredness on Jacob’s well ; Whom he had seen all hungry and thirsty ; Whom he had known in Gethsemane praying that bitter prayer, that if it be possible the cup might pass from Him : “Oh, My FATHER, let it pass away if it be possible : but Thy will be done nevertheless.” The same that on the Cross cried, “My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?” It is the same upon Whose breast he had leant at that last great supper, as looking up into His face with all the reverent familiarity of perfect human friendship. He saw it after a while ; after a while. Not at first ; not at first. Those who have never known GOD know no godly fear ; those to whom GOD has never been revealed sit unmoved by storm and tempest, unmoved during every revelation of Divine Majesty. But that seer and prophet Isaiah, in the olden days when he saw the glory, fell on his face, saying, “Woe, woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of

unclean lips." The disciple who was ready to die for Him, when he recognized that it was the CHRIST to Whom he was speaking, had no prayer but this: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." When the HOLY GHOST has convinced a man of sin, then the first thought before that revelation of the Eternal Trinity is "Who am I, that I should thus stand in the Presence of the most high GOD?" So was it even with the beloved disciple. For a moment he fell at His feet as dead; no heart beating, no hand moving, the brain powerless to think. Dead—he lay at His feet as dead.

And then began the great morning—the morning of the Divine power and glory. Then came first the laying the right hand upon him. "Fear not, I am He, the Living One, and I became dead, and I live for evermore," and "He laid His right hand upon me, and strengthened me." There was the first comfort for the personal life—the individual soul.

These simple words, "I became dead," brought it all back, at once, to the Apostle—all the mystery of the Passion, all the glory of the Resurrection, all the High Priesthood within the veil where He ever sitteth representing His people, sitting at the right hand of the FATHER equally over all and blessed for ever. S. John realized then that, worthy though he were, he was unworthy to approach his God. But he realized then that there was absolution—that the precious Blood cleanseth from all sin—that he might draw near with the full assurance of faith; and he was at peace. The old words of the upper chamber were again repeated in his inmost heart: "Peace be unto you." And then, secondly, when the anxiety about his own soul was set at rest, there was a revelation which was very comforting about the Church that he loved. These little flocks

at Smyrna and Ephesus lay on his soul, struggling out into existence. They were the candlesticks—the stars, the angels of the Church. “I hold the stars”—blessed be GOD for the words—“I hold the stars in My right hand. I walk up and down in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Disciple whom I love, Apostle whom I have sent forth, be thou at peace. Fierce may be the wild waves. Rest amid it all; amid the noise and the din as breaker after breaker dashes on the Church that you love. Come what will of persecution, failure, apparent death, I am He that liveth, and I will live for evermore, and I know the Church—I know My Bride. I have loved her, and I have washed her from her sins by My own most precious Blood. She is Mine, wedded to Me. Poor, insignificant it may be in the eye of man, but Mine—all that I have I have given to her.” “With all My worldly goods I thee endow, in the Name of the FATHER and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.” Oh, heavenly Bridegroom, blessed be Thy Name Who loveth this Church. “Fear not,” He says to the beloved disciple, “I am the Ruler, I am Governor of the Churches in Ephesus and Laodicea and Smyrna and Thyatira.”

But that was not all. After the personal question was settled, after the anxiety about the Church was set at rest, then he was led out into a lighter atmosphere; led away from all that was personal, led away even from what we should now call ecclesiastical; led into a great wide horizon by the CHRIST Who had never limited the work of His disciples to any narrow limit; the CHRIST Who had said, “Go and make disciples of all the nations, go and teach, go and preach, go everywhere, from north to south, from east to west, baptizing, confirming, feeding them with My Body and My Blood, sending out godly men chosen by My Spirit every-

where from the whole world—to the whole world I send you.” So the Apostle after all this—in the few brief moments of such an address as this, one can only touch on it—the Apostle in this letter tells how he was permitted to see a great door thrown wide open into heaven and to look upon GOD, to look on the jasper and sardonyx stone, and to listen to the songs of the angels, and to see the spirits and souls of the righteous, and to watch the great struggle that was to begin between the powers of evil and the powers of good ; to see the Church struggling in the wilderness, crushed by the world, allowed by GOD Himself to have principalities and powers warring against her, gaining triumphs over her. It was given to them to make such war with the saints, and they were allowed to conquer. It was given him to see it, and then in the far distance on a quiet evening, when the battle flag was furled and the war drum throbbed no longer, to see His own King, the King of Galilee, the King of the Passion, the King of the Ascension, to see Him there with the hallelujahs ringing all around Him, with the kings of death and hell and all that was evil cast into the lake of fire.

My brethren, the application of it all is obvious. You know, if you are true men and women, my sons and daughters, you know what sin is and you know what you need, and that CHRIST sends you to-day a message of absolution through that Blood that washes every sin. Like a child preparing for its Confirmation, begin with personal religion or you will never conquer the world. Begin, like a little child preparing for Confirmation, with penitence and with faith and with surrender, and then go out and take this branch of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church to which we belong ; this branch that has all the marks of GOD’s election, poverty—small in the eye of man—martyrs, saints,

confessors, holy men, godly matrons, all who have gone before the King clothed in the white robe pure and stainless, who have sowed the seed and entered into rest—this Church that can lift up her hand and show the mark of the nails. Go out and help her. Stand by us in our day of need. Stand by us when the whole world is asking your help. Stand by us with your prayers. Stand by us with your outspoken witness. Stand by us with encouraging arms. But do not stop there. Half the evils of Christendom have come from the exaggeration either of the personal life or of the ecclesiastical life. We must go forth. We are beings—you and I, the poorest crossing-sweeper who has strayed into the cathedral, who has been baptized and confirmed, fed with the Body and Blood of CHRIST; we are part of the chosen generation, the royal priesthood; priests to the whole world. There is no problem that men are trying to solve here or elsewhere, there is no difficulty on which the intellects of men are now being concentrated, which is not full of interest to us. There is no corner of the globe, no band of savages, no cultured Indians, who have not a share and a right to claim all that we can give; given generously in the Name of CHRIST Who is God of the whole earth. Yes, look out through the open door into that unseen world. See there your old bishop, not dead, as men call it, but alive, as he could not live when the body was pressing down the incorruptible spirit. See him there with all his great gifts developed a thousandfold and put to God's service. See him there, able to pray for you as he never could pray on earth. See him there watching, wondering perhaps—for knowledge must be limited for every finite being—wondering what shall be the next step in God's eternal counsels for this Scotland which he so truly made

his own. Look at him. See around him all that you have known and loved. See the great band of Apostles—ten thousand times ten thousand, who have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. And so, with the personal question settled, with the ecclesiastical system put into its proper proportions, with the whole world as the garden that we have to tend, we stand and lay it all, ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, at His feet—the Son of Man and SON of GOD.

VI

THE RETURN OF OUR LORD

“This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—ACTS i. 11.

THE object which I propose to myself is so to fix your thoughts upon the great truth which these words reveal as to save you from being diverted to those secondary issues by which oft-times the minds of men are distracted, and the power of the great Advent of JESUS CHRIST practically lost.

It requires a very little reflection to see that the great thought which GOD the HOLY SPIRIT in writing these words desires to fix upon our minds is this: that a Person will come back; that we shall look into the face of a living Person; that this Being Who was alive, died, ascended, is now living, will come back. “This same JESUS.”

The whole Bible seems to circle round the LORD JESUS CHRIST; Old Testament types and prophecies leading up to CHRIST; the Gospels giving us the history of the life, the Epistles applying the teaching; the whole revelation being like a great rainbow with one end resting on Olivet, the other hidden in the clouds where CHRIST has gone up on high, leading captivity captive. JESUS CHRIST is born in Bethlehem, He lives the quiet human life in Nazareth, He journeys up and down over those hills of Palestine; He gathers round Him a little

band of disciples, men of ordinary passions like ourselves, poor, weak, oft-times perplexed, intensely disliking every idea that He had to teach them, utterly shrinking from the ideal that was afterwards to be put before them. We see Him going up and down healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead ; we watch Him in all that tender human compassion, with the tears rolling down His cheek, helping the poor sinful woman of Samaria, falling asleep like a tired working man at the end of the long day's struggle to do His FATHER'S will.

But, on the other hand, He distinctly claims to be very GOD. His whole character is so calm ; He at once deprecates all mere emotion ; He shrinks from mere excited utterances ; He foretells without the slightest reserve the cross that is intended, the trial, and the persecution, the shame and the scorn, for which each one of His followers must be prepared. He bids them in measured accents to expect that tares be mingled with the wheat, to anticipate no speedy triumph, to be ready to win the battle only by suffering and dying. If a man will save his life, he must first lose it. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, if it is ever to bring forth fruit unto life everlasting. He is so calm that it is utterly to do violence to all the laws of psychology, it is simply to ignore the whole knowledge of human character which we have gained in bygone ages, to imagine such a Man as JESUS of Nazareth a mere deluded fanatic. He had none of the signs of the character of the fanatic. Still less, if possible—some of the great opponents of Christianity would acknowledge this—still less is it possible to gaze on that pure and holy life and to imagine Him, the very pattern of morality, deceived ; as His enemies liked to say, “deceiving the people.” No, my brethren, it is far more

difficult to believe that CHRIST was a mad self-deluded fanatic, far more difficult to believe that He was a deliberate impostor, than to accept the revelation of CHRIST, very GOD as well as very Man, which has been handed down to us in the records of the Holy Book, and endorsed by the testimony of thousands of saints and martyrs and confessors. This strange mysterious Person, gathering around Him the representatives of humanity, trains them for the coming agony ; and then we watch Him in Gethsemane, and we hear the cry of Calvary, and we stand by the opened grave on that Easter morning ; finally we mark the difference between the natural Body that preceded the Crucifixion and the spiritual Body, that Body which was more pliable, more ready to be guided by the Spirit, than the human flesh and bones to which you and I are accustomed. We see Him for forty days with a spiritual Body, as the Bible describes it : not subject precisely to the same physical laws to which it had been exposed before it was nailed to the Cross, but yet the self-same ; allowing S. Thomas, if he liked, to touch His hands and to see the mark of the nails, and even to put his hand into the wounded side, so that he might not be faithless, but believing.

Then this Person accustomed these representatives of the human race to recognize the great fact that He was with them, as surely when He was invisible as when they were able to handle Him with their human hands and gaze on Him with their human eyes. Suddenly, when they knew it not, He was in their midst ; as suddenly and unexpectedly He departed. And so, having trained them to expect something more glorious, to receive a higher dispensation, than anything which the mind of man had been able to conceive, He left with them the promise that, after He had ascended to the FATHER, they themselves should be endued with a mysterious super-

natural power, by which sooner or later the world would be subdued, not, however, at once, but after ages of struggling and fighting and testifying for the Crucified.

Then we see Him surrounded by those very men whom He had trained, who knew Him, as well as you and I know each other, on the Mount of Ascension. We watch Him "ascend." We can picture the scene if we like. The Bible is reticent on these points : thank GOD it is !

We can picture, through the help of the Greek word, the little band of disciples staring—for that is the meaning of the word—staring, gazing, looking, saying, "Is He really gone?" watching the last faint sign. "JESUS is gone ; He is gone up ; He said that He would depart ; and He has ascended."

Now let me try to show you the great mistake that has been made (giving only one instance to-day) by which the minds of men have been distracted from this great truth. What does it mean? The very blessing that GOD has given us—thank Him for it!—the very blessing that GOD has given us, in this day of more careful scientific study, increases the difficulty if once the mind descends to secondary points. What mean we by that description in the Revelation, "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven?" What mean we by all those words, "the trump of GOD," "the voice of the archangel," and the like? And so gradually, in the very act of the intelligent study of Holy Scripture, our minds are drawn down to considering little petty details, instead of keeping the soul fixed on that grand principle, "This same JESUS, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Now, brethren, a very few simple words will be

sufficient to show the folly—to use no other word—the folly of all this. The deep thinkers have recognized the mystery of life, with very few exceptions. They recognize, as the old patriarch recognized, the impossibility of proving even that I am alive ; the impossibility of explaining the long process by which man is brought into being, grows up as the same, and yet he is not the same, through all the varying periods of his natural life. I ask you to prove to me that you are alive. You say, “ I know it.” I answer you back, “ Then, as you know that, so I know that the truth I believe is of GOD : I received it on evidence, I tested the evidence, and now for a lifetime I have found in my own experience and the experience of hundreds of others, confirmations of the truth that I first took on the word of the Living GOD. I know GOD lives, and I know that JESUS is GOD ; and I can prove it as well as you can prove that you are alive.”

The difficulty arises chiefly from a mass of men who have studied superficial books. Often they have not knowledge enough to be conscious of the difficulties by which everywhere they are surrounded. Every man who understands anything is perfectly aware that all words relating to things like time and space are mere forms of thought, as we call them, and that as soon as we have passed out of time into eternity, by the very force of the change, all the illustrations that were drawn from time must have lost to a large extent their significance. Every one who has studied or thought is perfectly aware that, when he asks GOD to come, or speaks of going to GOD, and the like, or talks of GOD repenting, or of GOD feeling, or of GOD going from place to place, he is using language that is necessary in order to express the ideas that he desires to communicate to his fellow-men, but that with GOD there is no coming or going—GOD is everywhere present.

If any of us are alive at the time when CHRIST comes back, and if a man should have the leisure, and the power of self-concentration and of thought : if he is able, in the midst of those great convulsions as we see the LORD JESUS CHRIST visibly present, to retire to his library and to write an intelligent article for a scientific Review, I have not, my brethren, the slightest doubt that he would express the phenomena by which we shall be surrounded in very different language from that in which GOD has seen fit to express it in Holy Scripture. Do you not see that if GOD had described things in modern language, the poor people who lived in the first and the second and the third centuries would never have understood a word of their Bible : that if the Bible had been written in the most accurate way, all, except possibly two or three of our own day, would find it a sealed book ? GOD wrote for all His children. GOD proclaimed truth. GOD cannot lie, but the truth must be clothed in language "understood of the people."

So, to carry out that thought, you will see it is comparatively little matter to us what is the exact meaning of these words by which the phenomenon is described. What GOD wishes you and me to understand is this : that the LORD JESUS CHRIST will be seen by you and by myself, that every eye shall see Him ; and that, whenever that Advent may be, the best description that you can have of the natural surroundings that you will behold with your human eyes is that which the Living GOD, the Creator of heaven and of earth, has given us in Holy Scripture.

Surely, any ordinary man describing what he saw, or describing what he will see, at the second Advent, would describe it in those words that GOD has written over and over again, not in isolated passages but as the burden alike of Old Testament prophecy and of New Testa-

ment revelation : The loftiness of man will be bowed down, the haughtiness of men will be made low ; they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man will run into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. That is just one text out of hundreds, I might almost say, in the Old Testament. And then you have the same teaching in the New Testament, both in the plain language of the Gospels, and in the beautiful imagery of the Revelation ; prophets, evangelists, all combining to express in different language the same grand idea of GOD ; in order that men may be able, even the poorest and most unlettered, to form a general and imperfect, but yet true, conception of that which will happen, whether we are alive on this earth when CHRIST comes back, or have to be clothed with our resurrection bodies and to meet Him in the air. You know the passage as well as I do : "Every eye shall see Him." There is no difficulty, my brethren, in understanding the general idea of consternation, of perplexity, of fear, contained in this description of the things that are coming on the earth, when the inhabitants shall say to the mountains, "Fall on us, hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." No man, I say, who has ever pictured to himself a mighty world consumed, and men fleeing from the face of GOD, can have any difficulty, unless he is utterly devoid of imagination, in picturing to himself his own face and the face of his companions when GOD ariseth to shake terribly the earth. My brethren, it is true ; as true as any other fact that GOD has revealed.

And the practical conclusion is very easily deduced.

“This same JESUS, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

My brethren, what a comfort this is ! In those days when we are so conscious of our own wickedness, our negligences and ignorances, our continual failures, our broken resolutions, our almost hopeless struggles against the world and the flesh and the devil ; those hours when we feel that even our best and dearest friend must consider us so unreal, when even our clergyman must doubt the truth of our profession—oh, is it not an unspeakable blessing, that we are able to take up that old Gospel, and follow that tender compassionate One with that human heart, with that gentleness and compassion, and power to make allowance for any one of His poor trembling disheartened followers ? Is it not a blessing that it is He Whom we have to meet, JESUS CHRIST the Son of Mary, very man no less than very GOD ; that it is this same JESUS, of Whom the Gospels testify in all their beautiful details, Who shall so come in like manner as they saw Him go into heaven ?

But on the other hand, my brethren, is it not solemn ? Is there not a solemn meaning in the words that we say so continually : “He shall judge the quick and the dead” ; “We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge” ; “At Whose coming all men shall rise again, and give account for their own works” ?

My brethren, is there not something very awful in these words, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof” ; “GOD shall bring every secret thought into judgement” ? How GOD can do anything, we know not. That which is impossible with man, is possible with GOD. How GOD createth, how GOD gave life to us, how GOD preserves life, we know

not. How GOD will judge, we cannot explain ; but "this same JESUS," to Him we must give an account.

My brethren, I repeat it, is the thought not a solemn one ? The boy, when he has done wrong, knows how he shrinks from meeting the mother whose heart will be broken by his sin. The girl who honours her father knows what it is to expect his return after a long absence, and to be obliged to confess that she has broken his law. The wife who has been false to her husband, the husband who is afraid of being found out when he is sinning against his wife, each man and woman and child that has ever known what it is to face a justly offended person, can enter somewhat into the meaning of the words.

It is well to take advantage of each warning ; as when the doctor tells us we are not as strong as we were, when one after another dies unexpectedly in our midst. Let us thank GOD if we are ready to die and to meet our Judge ; and although we cannot understand all the definite circumstances of the Advent, yet the thought of the Bible is the meeting of a Person, One with eyes like a flame of fire. "There is mercy with Thee," the Bible says, "therefore"—observe the words—"therefore Thou shalt be feared." It is because He is so true, because He is so able to understand all about us, that He is to be feared. He knows the opportunities that we have had ; others may not have had the same. The whole school may have sinned ; and not one of them may have sinned in the same way as the boy who knew better. The whole world may have gone wrong ; and yet we may be judged by a different standard, because we were brought up in a different way ; or had different privileges, heard different teaching, and lived where the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST was offered us continually.

My brethren, these things are realities. Every one of us must see that Living LORD ; and from the day that consciousness dawned, to the last expiring moment of our life, before Him no secret thought is hid. "This same JESUS Himself shall so come" ; and you and I must to Him give the whole account of the money, the time, the prayers, the life ; all that is hidden here. "Give an account of thyself."

VII

WHAT CHRIST FORETOLD

“This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—Acts i. 11.

WE have considered one great mistake by means of which Satan robs men of the power and the comfort of Advent teaching. To-day we have to consider another of the crafts and assaults of the devil, by means of which he has so blinded the eyes, even of men who in other points are intelligent, that this grand text has practically lost its power over their hearts and lives.

Now let us approach it as from a distance. No book, I think, is treated so unfairly as the Bible. No human system is handled in so ungenerous, not to say foolish, a manner as Christianity. To the founder of no earthly society has so scant a measure of justice been accorded as to Him by Whom were laid the foundations of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church. I seem to myself to be uttering commonplaces when I say that the founder of any religious system has a right to ask that before our verdict is pronounced, the documents in which the scheme is promulgated be calmly, impartially, and carefully considered. Has this been done by you with the person and religion of JESUS of Nazareth? Has this common justice been given to that Holy Book that I hold in my hand? Here

are, to put it into very simple language, the "Objects" of the Bible: to show men what they have done wrong, to lead them to be good, to make them holy, as their GOD and FATHER is holy. That is simple enough, is it not? This is what the Book just professes to do, and then it goes on to remind us that it is very important that we should be thoroughly furnished to these good works; that we should thus be taught, corrected, improved, and the like; because every man must give an account of himself and not of his neighbour to GOD, that every knee must bow before GOD sooner or later, and that GOD will bring every secret thought into judgement.

Now let us look at this matter from the outside. If I am told that there is a GOD, and that I may die any moment, and that ages yet unborn of my future happiness or misery depend upon what I do in this life: I should imagine that it would be of vital, aye! of pressing importance, to satisfy myself first of all whether there is a GOD. And I should subordinate to that one grand inquiry all my pleasure and business, and not rest till I either tossed it aside as a figment of an ancient superstition, or recognized that there was a GOD.

If I had satisfied myself there is a GOD, the next question would obviously be, What about that Man Who occupied so prominent a place in the Bible? Did He say that He was indeed GOD, that He came from GOD, and returned to GOD, and was GOD? Upon what is that claim based?

There is not time to follow out the thought, but you will see at once that the rational way to deal with the Book that professes to be given by GOD (not to teach us science, which GOD teaches in other ways, but) to make us good and holy, that we may be happy here

and glorified hereafter, is to settle as the first question, Is there a GOD? And the second question is like unto it, Did JESUS of Nazareth live, and if so, was He GOD? And if these two questions be settled in the affirmative, then it is comparatively easy to bring the various truths and difficulties of life to the touchstone of what JESUS CHRIST, by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, has said about them.

Now, my brethren, I ask you again in all calmness, is this the course which men in our own day are adopting? Is it not a fact that two-thirds of the conversation that you hear about the Bible and about JESUS CHRIST is centred upon some question which is either utterly absurd, or, if of importance, only of secondary importance compared with the Existence of a GOD, the Divinity of JESUS CHRIST, and the claims of CHRIST upon the individual spirit?

Last week I was speaking to a man—to whom, if there was the least chance of his ever being here or knowing that he had been quoted, I should not refer—one in the prime of life, well educated, thoughtful and intelligent, and for some two or three hours able to converse in a way that made me sure that sooner or later GOD would lead him into the full light of truth. We were speaking about the things that I am bringing before you this morning, and he said to me, "There are so many difficulties." He was a man above the average of my congregation in intelligence. And I said to him, "What are the difficulties? I know, GOD knows, that there are difficulties enough in this great mystery of life by which we are surrounded, but what is *the* difficulty for you in the Bible?" He said, "The whole of those figures in that Book of Genesis; to believe that Methuselah really lived so long is beyond my power as a reasoning being; I cannot take it in." And another man will tell me that

he is perplexed about the numbers of the children of Israel, and the quantity of people that did certain things, or were slain at a certain battle. My brethren, is this not ridiculous? Where does GOD ever promise that He would work a perpetual miracle whenever a manuscript was copied, especially in earlier days with all the difficulties by which such transcription was surrounded? And what earthly matter is it to you or to me whether Methuselah lived nine years or nine thousand? We have to live with GOD or away from GOD longer than nine or ninety thousand years.

Or, again, when men come to the Bible you find them discussing points that the Church, thank GOD! has never pronounced any definite judgement upon, such as inspiration. What do you mean by inspiration? How are the Divine and the human mingled? How are they mingled in your own existence? How are the Divine and the human mingled in the Person of JESUS CHRIST?

It is the fashion nowadays for men to picture to themselves what I call a fancy religion, a sort of religion that they think JESUS CHRIST might have promulgated. They never ask what CHRIST, Who came from heaven, said that Christianity would accomplish. They do not ask what was in the mind of the Founder, or what were the promises He gave to His first disciples.

For example, what do you hear on every side? How can I believe that CHRIST was GOD, and Christianity from heaven, when I mark the little effect that it has on the lives of professing Christians? When I look round I see a lack of unity in the Church. I see men divided; one believing this, and another something diverse. When I look from my own Church to the Church of Rome, I find indeed a profession of unity; but whenever I travel in the countries where the Roman Catholic Faith is professed, I make the discovery pretty quickly

that it is a mere outside profession, that there is as real a division and as much separation of thought hidden beneath the surface as has ever been found in the Anglican Communion.

Then men pass on and they say, If for nineteen hundred years the Church has lived, why are so few converted? Why is the world not better? Why are we surrounded on all sides by these gigantic frauds? Why do we find men giving a thousand pounds to a church, and taking ten thousand by swindling their neighbours? Why all this inconsistency, this form of godliness? Why is it? It is not from God; it is all imposture.

Now, my brethren, it is a commonplace that I am bringing before you to-day. It is simply worth while at this stage of our discussion to consider what the Founder Himself says. He says that every individual man and woman and child will be judged fairly and truly by the law of loving justice; that God has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; that God willeth all men to be saved; that He has provided a complete atonement, so that the past can be buried, man's sin washed away, and power poured in to walk in newness of life. But He tells us that He respects the liberty of the individual, and heaven is not a dungeon in which men are bound by chains, but that each one in his own separate individuality has the power of choosing life or death. There is something intensely sober-minded (if I may use such a word) in the New Testament, and that is why I cling to it, apart from that it is the Word of God. There is in it a practical description of a man giving his property into some one else's hands, and then coming back and asking what has been done with the money. Some had ten pounds, and some had five pounds, and some one. There is fair unerring justice, tempered by

intense compassion, dealt out to each according to what he had received. And to-night you or I, instead of going to sleep, may be standing before our LORD. We have had unexpected deaths in this parish nearly every week since Easter.

But whenever you or I meet our LORD, He will take account of all about us, our childhood, parents, education, Church, sermons, the few opportunities or the many, the bad education or the good, the religious or godless parents, everything. Every one will give account of himself, of his whole life. The man who has hardly done anything for GOD may be far beyond you or me; because he may have had so much less opportunity. We have had the opportunity of giving abundant proof of our ministry, some of us, we have had glorious privileges from childhood; and yet some poor soul that we despise may be higher in the kingdom far than ourselves, because he has never had the opportunities.

But besides all this individual dealing with souls, the LORD GOD tells us over and over again that there are general purposes which are being accomplished by men and the world, and by the Church; and that a great education is going on by the instrumentality of the Church and the world in which our lot is cast. (See *Eph.* iii. 10, 11.) In other words, there are schemes too deep for the mind of man to penetrate into the vast abyss. "Canst thou by searching find out GOD?" "If then," saith CHRIST, "I tell you earthly things, and you cannot explain them, how would you understand if I were to tell you of the invisible principalities and powers of the heavenly kingdom?"

But the facts that are revealed are intensely simple and intensely clear. I love to think of my GOD manifested in the flesh; I like to contrast that strong SON

of GOD with the weak effeminate thinkers of modern days ; I like to look not merely on the compassionate JESUS, but on that—

“Strong SON of GOD, . . . the highest, holiest manhood, Thou!”

Earthly leaders cheer on their followers by the thoughts of victory and of spoil. CHRIST set before them suffering, the cross, and death. And for fear they should be indignant against their persecutors, He said, “Do not judge them ; they will not all be wicked men ; some will think they are doing GOD service. My Gospel will not convert the world ; it must be published for a witness through the world, that is all.” The mystery of iniquity, He said, was to go on ; tares, He said, were to be mingled with the wheat, inside the Church wicked and good together. And when men wanted to turn out all the bad and excommunicate them, He said, “No, let both grow together till the harvest ; I will risk the loss, I will risk the misinterpretation, let both grow together.”

My brethren, I wonder whether your minds are following me. Try and gather them together ; and if I have led you away by any mistake of mine, try and follow back again.

The Founder said that His Gospel was to be preached for a witness, but it would not convert the world, in this dispensation, at any rate. He said that the tares (that is, wicked people with the form of godliness but denying its power) should grow mingled with the wheat. He said that the real devoted disciples would be a little flock. He said that iniquity would abound, and the love of Christians for each other would wax cold.

He said (if it is rightly interpreted it is a wonderful picture of what is going on now) that the Old and the

New Testament would be robbed in men's minds of all their vitality, and like dead bodies would be tossed out in the street, and the world would make merry over them, and say, "They have lost their life and their power," and for many days they would rejoice over the Bible that tormented them, tossed out (as it were) into the middle of the street, and the people making merry over it. If that be a possible interpretation of the passage, it is a striking picture. At any rate the fact is plain enough.

And CHRIST said to His disciples, "When I come back, do you think I shall find the faith on the earth?" What exactly He meant of course is uncertain. I believe what He meant was this: that there would be among men a popular religion (such the devil does not find it worth his while stopping, because it does not make men really holy), but that the faith would be sealed which was once delivered to the saints, the deep heart-searching faith that makes a man loathe sin and count it an abominable thing, the faith that makes man do his duty not merely to God but to his neighbour, and fulfil the old Catechism in all its hard teaching. There would be a popular religion that says a word or feels a feeling, but neglects the plain duties that God has inscribed on the conscience of a redeemed humanity.

And so, again, He says, as years roll on and the coming of the LORD draweth nigh, men will turn the very blessing of GOD into a curse; now that order in nature, that fixedness by which we are able to count on the right time for sowing and reaping, and the due succession of day and night and summer and winter, shall be so turned by the devil against the GOD Who gave it in His love, that men will say, "It is absurd to expect another dispensation, it is absurd to expect

CHRIST'S coming or any alteration, for look, where is the promise of His coming? everything continues as it was from the beginning of the creation, and there is no personal GOD at all; it is all a matter of cause and effect."

Now, all this was described by the Founder, by the Man Who founded Christianity, the Man Who knew all about it, the only Being Who has a right to be heard in such a question as this. And then He tells us how the individual boy or man gradually hardens; there is first remorse, tears perhaps, a hard struggle to give up Communion, and almost fighting with GOD in the boy's soul before he can give up going regularly to church; and then gradually it all passes away, the Bible and prayer are given up, and he is contented, and has not a fear of death or of judgement. Just as on some winter's day the snowflakes accumulate as they fall from the grey sky above, one by one; although each flake is so tiny that ere you have looked at it and measured it, it is melted in your hand; even so sin to-day and yesterday and the day before is accumulating.

Precisely in the self-same way has the Founder of Christianity told us that the world would become worse and worse, and that the few who were caring about Christianity would be spreading the Gospel for a witness, that it might be published in every shore and in every land. Then, when the world has become as bad as it could be, and the angels had been taught for eternity not to trifle with evil, having marked the development of sin working out into the great mystery of iniquity; when, though each individual has been treated according to perfect love and perfect truth, the world as a whole has become utterly corrupt; this dispensation shall be brought to a close, and the King shall appear, as S. John saw Him in all the beautiful symbolism of the apocalyptic

vision, going forth on the white horse conquering and to conquer.

Yet, brethren, the GOD of hope will fill you with such joy and peace in believing that you shall abound in hope. The more iniquity abounds, the more the love of many waxes cold, the more you are perplexed by the heart-burnings and divisions and want of love, even amongst professing Christians, the more you are scandalized by those gigantic frauds perpetrated by professing Christians, the more you will feel hope. You know what a man knows when the physician has told him that the effect of the medicine will be first to make him feel much worse, but that if he only has the courage to hold on then the recovery is certain !

Yes, thank GOD for it ! Every saint that you and I part with—each body we lay in the grave—is but the outward sign of one spirit more gone to swell the mystic number, and so make the day nearer when the King can come back in His glory. Every mission that GOD blesses in Africa, or India, or the far-off Melanesian islands is just one step in publishing the Gospel throughout the world to hasten the Advent of our King.

Amid the consternation of the world and the confusion of the hypocrites, we shall hear, not the sound of judgement, not the appalling cry that frightens the careless unreal hypocrite, but the joyous song. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto virgins that went forth to meet the bridegroom. There shall be the festal joy and the lamps and the lights burning, for the King has come back, CHRIST the glorious King !

Even so, come, LORD JESUS, come quickly !

VIII

THE KING OF GLORY

“This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—ACTS i. 11.

I HAVE striven to warn you against that most common mistake of concentrating the attention on disputed details connected with the second Advent, instead of fixing our thoughts upon the awfully solemn truth that is contained in my text. Many more instances might be given than those which have been already adduced of this dangerous tendency. I think sufficient has been said to warn you against being led away to any of these considerations, however interesting, as to the future of Israel, the recovery of the ten tribes, the pre-millennial or post-millennial kingdom of CHRIST; and to guard you also against confusing the gradual amelioration that is being effected by the ordinary processes of civilization with that grand regeneration of humanity for which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.

To put it into plain words: what you and I have to consider is the thought on which the Church every Advent fixes our minds; sooner or later every eye must look upon JESUS CHRIST. Each entire life must be surrendered to Him, the account of every secret thought and every idle word. Unless He has allowed me to be deceived, unless His words have no meaning, every

thought and word of my life must be bared, not before a system, not before a mere abstraction, but before a living Being. In other words, we have to remember that the LORD GOD Almighty, CHRIST the King, will not ask what we have been, so far as religious shibboleths and philosophic systems were concerned, but will take to pieces our hearts and lives with the most solemn and yet tender scrutiny.

I desire now to point out to you how the Almighty GOD, first by the Gospel, secondly by the discipline of life, is ever lifting up our hearts with a solemn joy to the thought of that second Advent which is now being brought before us in the services of our Church.

First, GOD leads us to the Advent by the Gospel. Let us if possible get rid of the common popular delusions as to the meaning of this word Gospel, or good news. If you ask many people what they mean by the word "gospel," they will tell you, "Of course I mean the blessed truth that on account of the death of CHRIST my sin can be forgiven." Many violent partisans hasten from church to church, return perhaps having listened to some of the master-thinkers of our day, and yet with scorn will tell you that "it was good in its way, but it was not a gospel sermon." You who frequent this church are familiar with the oft-repeated teaching that, of all the blessings that GOD has given to us, few can be compared with that unspeakable mercy of our GOD in offering Himself freely to us as a FATHER reconciled through the Atonement of JESUS CHRIST. No one can value more than I do that little bit, that fragment of the Gospel, which the fancy religion of the present day, the popular superficial theology, has exalted into the place occupied in the Bible by that which is emphatically "The Gospel." But there is more to say.

What, my brethren, is the teaching of the Bible? What did the LORD JESUS CHRIST and His Apostles mean by the Gospel? "JESUS began to preach the Gospel." And what was that? The Gospel, He says, of the kingdom. And the result of the preaching, and the surroundings of the preaching were, healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease; delivering the bodies and the souls of men from the captivity of Satan. And so the LORD JESUS went on His work of mercy, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, though nothing had as yet been said or whispered about His Atonement, except in private to a few chosen disciples. Again, we hear of Him preaching the glad tidings, showing forth everywhere the glad tidings of the kingdom. And then, in the forty days that elapsed between His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, having for a moment, as it were in passing, taught the poor doubting disciples that it was necessary for Him to die upon the Cross, He then addressed Himself to His proper work of publishing the Gospel of the kingdom, as we read in Acts i. 3, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of GOD."

So you find that the Apostles understood it; and that S. Philip, and S. Paul in his entire ministry (up to the very end of the Acts,) were occupied in bearing witness to the kingdom of GOD. If you take a concordance and follow through that word "Gospel" from the beginning to the end of the Bible, you will find that it is the evangel, the good news that the kingdom of GOD has been established upon earth; that CHRIST, having taken humanity into Himself, taken the manhood, as the Creed says, into GOD, has come on earth, has set up a throne, and has brought down the laws of the supernatural kingdom so that they can now be embodied in the lives and the experience of ordinary Christians like ourselves. You

will find that that word "Gospel," if you follow it through the Bible, includes everything connected with the birth, the temptation, the teaching, the suffering, the Resurrection, the Ascension of the Founder. Nay, so far has popular theology forgotten its meaning, that the New Testament writers speak of man's being judged, of that awful scrutiny that shall one day be made into every thought and word and deed, as being a part of the blessed Gospel: "they shall be judged according to My Gospel."

Now, dear brethren, following on this thought, let us see for a moment what is the idea of this kingdom. We find it with its Sacraments and its officers. I am preaching to you now no "ecclesiastical crotchet." I am teaching you what you can find in any infidel historian, however little he may believe in the Sacraments or value the officers; I am teaching you what you find brought out in a book like *Ecce Homo*, quite as much as in any Scriptural account of the life and works of JESUS CHRIST.

What is the idea of this kingdom which has (I repeat the words) its Sacraments, Baptism and the LORD'S Supper, and its officers? What is the ruling idea of Baptism as embodied, for instance, in our own Prayer Book? It is the gathering out of all who will to be admitted into the kingdom. It is putting the mark of CHRIST on each individual forehead to link it on with the great Founder of Christianity; to make each man and woman and child a part of the glorious army whereby the King eventually will subdue the world beneath His feet. It is the enlisting into that army, men of diverse occupations, not merely the clergy. Of all miserable mistakes, few are more deadly in their effect than the common talk which describes a man about to be ordained as "going into the Church," as if he

had not been baptized when he was a child and made a member of CHRIST and the child of the Eternal and the heir of all the privileges of the kingdom!

What is Baptism, I say, but the gathering of recruits into the great army, those destined for fighting, suffering, dying, and at last conquering, with CHRIST their King?

Why is this army enlisted? What is the object of this great warfare? It is that the SON of GOD may triumph by the calm solemn power of moral as distinguished from physical force; by gaining wills, by waiting, if need be, for centuries till the free-will of a sufficient number has yielded unto Him, so that with their co-operation He may be able to subdue His enemies beneath His feet. What, I say, is the idea but the gathering in of numbers, by whose co-operation the King may gradually be established openly before the world as the Sovereign of the Universe in the glory of His Advent? The whole idea of Baptism is the gathering people out of the world and thus getting ready for the return of the King.

If you take the parables of the Church in the concluding chapters of the Gospel of S. Matthew, especially such parables as the parable of the Talents, of the Pounds, of the Ten Virgins, you see what the underlying idea always is, waiting for the Bridegroom, preparing to give an account to the King Who is coming back to take account of His servants, and the like. And I need not, except just in passing, touch upon the words with which we are so familiar in the service for Holy Communion, taken as you know from the Bible, "you show forth the LORD'S death till He come." We never communicate, we never hear that office, without being reminded that this life is an incomplete and a fragmentary condition; that we are only, as it were,

preparing for the return of the King, for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom.

So, again, take the officers of the Church. And let us consider this subject without any discussion now as to what is meant by ministers or priests or anything of the kind. It is a simple matter of common-sense that there are certain offices to be filled in the Church, and there are certain men set apart for these offices; just as certain men go into business, and some into the Army, and some into the Navy, and so forth. All form part of the army of CHRIST; but some are set apart to be its officers. Now, what is the commission, what are the marching orders of all CHRIST'S officers, of every bishop, and priest, and deacon?

“Go,” He says. Then He tells them the two-fold manner in which their message will be received. In one city, He says, you will be welcomed. Abide in it; teach everybody; say, “The kingdom of God is established; CHRIST has been born and lived and died and risen and ascended into heaven.” Preach, that is, the Gospel of One Who is very God and very Man. When you have published your message, appoint pastors to teach the people, to perfect the saints, to prepare them for the glorious coming of the King; and you yourselves pass on to another city. If you are not welcomed, as will be the case in many places, shake off, He says, the dust of your feet. Use no weapons of war against them. Only as ye depart say, “Be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you.”

What was the object of all this baptizing and preaching in the mind of the Founder? How does He describe it to us Himself? Why is it that pastors and teachers are to train the saints? Why is it that evangelists are to go from city to city and from shore to

shore? In order that—mark the words, for they contain the essence of this Advent teaching—in order, He says, not that the world may be converted and then the King come back, but that the Gospel of the kingdom may be preached for a witness, for a testimony, amongst all nations. And then shall the end come. I hope you have caught the thought, my brethren. There is the King on Mount Olivet, looking forward to the day when, surrounded by saints and martyrs and confessors and ten thousand times ten thousand angels, He shall appear, no longer (as the Advent collect expresses it) in humility, but in the magnificence of a recognized kingdom.

And the link between the two is this Church, the Bride that He leaves behind. And this Bride has her Sacraments and her officers. And the whole end and aim of the Church's mission, the whole idea underlying her Sacraments and the marching orders of the officers is:—as quickly as possible to have the message proclaimed, not received by everybody, but proclaimed everywhere; in order that it may be possible for the Bridegroom to return to the Bride that has long been mourning His absence, in order that the Advent may be accomplished, and the primeval idea of the great Creator be once more embodied on this earth.

I can now merely remind you of the more familiar side of my subject, the way in which, by the discipline of life, God is making us ready for the second Advent. Here great caution of expression is necessary. God Almighty has not been pleased to reveal to us the reason why evil has been permitted to enter into this world. He has not been pleased to explain to us how a God of holiness can tolerate age after age the abounding iniquity by which we are everywhere confronted. Again and again, from the time of David, God's people have cried,

“How long, O GOD holy and true, how long” shall iniquity flourish? How long shall Thy Sacraments be despised? How long shall Thy Table be spread only to be dishonoured? How long shall the Blood of Calvary be trampled under foot? Why pluckest Thou not Thy hand out of Thy bosom to destroy Thy enemies?

GOD is strong, and GOD is patient, and GOD can afford (if I may use the word) to be misunderstood. He knows that His children trust Him. No earthly father expects his boy to consider him a liar and a cheat and a cruel man until he has proved himself other than a loving, wise, and true father. Wisdom is justified of her children. GOD waits; and man should be very careful how he dares to explain what GOD has left in obscurity.

But one thing is most clearly revealed. One good which GOD is accomplishing through all the disorder of this lower earth, through all the evil and strife and entanglements by which we are surrounded, is to make us cry as we should never have cried if we had been sailing over a calm unruffled sea, “Come, LORD JESUS, come quickly!”

Yes, my brethren, if you look into your Bibles a little more you will, as it were, see some reason for all the strife and the discord in the Church, all the manifold hindrances by which we are beset, all our temptations and struggles after holiness which seem ever to be ending in failure, all the difficulties of this lower earth over which you so often groan in secret, praying Almighty GOD to deliver you from the evil if His is indeed the kingdom and the power and the glory. All this is within the sphere of GOD the Blessed SPIRIT. All this strange discipline of life is being overruled, in order that we may become more and more dissatisfied with everything that is of the earth; in order that we may

never look upon this world with its miserable confusion as the eternal home of the ransomed of the LORD. Ever and anon we seem to hear, above all the noise and the discord and the wrangling of this lower earth the quiet song of the angels, the harbingers of the coming Advent. Ever and anon, if we study our Bible, the deeper the darkness the more certain we are of the approaching dawn. Ever and anon, when heart and flesh are failing, and men of this world are simply breaking down under manifold trials and sorrows and bereavements, we may lift up our hearts and we thank GOD that HIS WORD is being fulfilled. Here we have only the thorns and briars ; here there can be at best but a half-fulfilled idea, a half-realized anticipation : in order that the bride may never forget her absent LORD, in order that Sunday after Sunday each man and woman and child, who has been baptized into the Body of CHRIST, and has fed on that one Bread and is made to drink of that one Cup, may lift up his heart and voice in the grand old hymn which has stayed the hearts and strengthened the courage of thousands of saints and martyrs and confessors : that hymn with which, GOD helping us, we utter our Advent cry—

“O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel.”

IX

HOPE AND HOLY FEAR

“This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—ACTS i. 11.

I HAVE striven to withdraw your minds from all unpractical questions. I have striven to bring you back from all by-paths of speculation, however interesting, into that narrow road of God's written Word. I have endeavoured to show you now the one end and aim of the Church's mission—the one object with which the Gospel of the kingdom is published, ministers ordained, Sacraments established, the great memorial offered to the Eternal FATHER in the Name of the Crucified by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT. I have tried to point out how the one end and aim of the Church's life is simply that, like S. John the Baptist, she may go from place to place into every nation and language and tongue; to awaken the careless by telling them that the day of the LORD is at hand, to perfect the saints by reminding them of the glorious hope and the great appearing of their GOD and Saviour CHRIST, to make ready a people prepared for the LORD; that so, the moment that the Gospel of the kingdom has been published for a witness in every nation, the Bridegroom may return, Emmanuel may come back to deliver His captive Israel from the bondage of corruption, and to restore them to the glorious liberty of primeval Paradise.

To-day the collect reminds us of many hindrances. "We are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us." That is the pitiable touching appeal of the children of the great FATHER to the Eternal Creator. "FATHER, raise up Thy power and come among us ; we are sore let, greatly hindered, bound hand and foot, in running the race that is set before us."

Then the Church reminds us by the words that she puts on our lips, that these hindrances, by the very condition of our being (thank GOD!), can be entirely got rid of ; that Almighty GOD has put us into a supernatural kingdom where abounding grace has been covenanted unto us ; that we have been hidden in JESUS CHRIST in order that the life and the power and the glory of the Incarnate GOD may so take possession of us that all that is weak and wavering and earthly shall vanish as the darkness before the breaking dawn ; that the life-current that came down from GOD, and floweth on through the Incarnate CHRIST by the ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT, can drive back the whole tide of the kingdom of death. Thanks be to GOD, His might can deliver us from all the hindrances by which we are beset, and enable us to run—not to walk with halting steps—to run in the way of GOD's commandments. In order to be practical, I would now fix your minds upon two hindrances. It is the lack of two special definite gifts of GOD, hope and holy fear, which is ruining, or at least, hindering, numberless souls in our midst. Yet the fact that we are taught to pray for those gifts is, according to the Divine economy, a pledge that they shall be supplied unto us if we are not weary of asking.

Now, first for a moment think about this want of hope. It would be easy, if time permitted, to enlarge on this subject ; to point out how one characteristic of the English character, as distinguished from other races,

is the want of brightness of life, how the very climate seems to strengthen this depression of temperament which is almost peculiar to the race. Those who are familiar with our current literature must often have observed the signs of that peculiar languor (perhaps that is as good a word as any to express it) which steals almost unconsciously over the individual, the Church, the nation, when the freshness of the morn is over, when the noontide heat has made itself felt, and the freshening breeze of eventide has not yet approached.

Those who care to follow out the thought will find it developed (far better than I have either the time or the ability to develop it) by him who seems, consciously or unconsciously, to be used by Almighty God to proclaim the parables of the nineteenth century for intellectual seekers after God. You remember that wondrous description, how "in the afternoon"—every word is, as is always the case with him, important and has its significance; you will not catch it all as I read it, but follow it out afterwards—

"In the afternoon . . . they came unto a land,
In which it seemed always afternoon"—

always afternoon !

"All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream :
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon ;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem . . .
A land where all things always seemed the same !"

And then you remember how he goes on to tell us that, instead of looking forward, the lotus-eaters were always looking back; gathering the branches laden with flowers and fruits, not opening buds with the promise of coming glory—

"But evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar."

They sang—

“Why should life all labour be?
Let us alone. What is there that will last? . . .
What pleasure?”

Of course, pleasures are the only end of life—

“What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death or dreamful ease.”

My brethren, what a marvellous description of ourselves! Look round the drawing-rooms; look round your own clubs; look round the House of Commons when there is no party fight; look round hundreds of churches; we have “come to a land in which it seemeth always afternoon!”

It is very hard, nay! it is impossible for man to drive back the current of the age. It is impossible for any human power to arouse a race, a nation, a Church, out of such a condition as this. So the prophet of the LORD is bidden to go up and down in the midst of his brethren, and to proclaim the glad tidings of the supernatural kingdom. He is to tell men of a bountiful grace; to remind them that hope is the gift of GOD; that hope is quite different from the outcome of a good digestion or a sanguine temperament; that hope is put in the Bible on the level of faith and love; and that the Church has ever taught us to pray, “Pour into our hearts”—we cannot bring it out of the sand—“pour into our hearts the living water of this most excellent gift of hope.”

And if you ask me what I mean by all this, and how hope is to be obtained, a practical answer, GOD

helping me, shall be given to-day. Take the Bible, take a concordance, and write out the glorious privileges of the New Testament under the head of "hope." See how GOD promises to give hope, to fill us with hope, to make us abound in hope; to give us such a glorious outlook into the world beyond, that it shall be almost impossible for us to put in restrained language the great uplifting of our heart. Having seen your privileges, secondly, kneel down and thank GOD for them. And then, thirdly, ask GOD the Blessed SPIRIT to bring out of the bountiful treasure-house of grace and mercy for you this gift of hope. Put it down in your little book of private prayer. Ask GOD for it every day.

Yes! taught by the HOLY SPIRIT, filled with this supernatural stream that floweth from beneath the throne of GOD and of the Lamb, you shall wonder, brethren beloved in CHRIST, as you look round on the dreary sleepy faces of the men by whom you are surrounded, and shall look with an unspeakable compassion on the poor weary women toiling to kill their day. You shall thank GOD Who has filled you with such an outlook upon the future, upon the coming King, the glorious development of all and more than all that the mind of man shall conceive. You shall leave behind you memory with all that is dark, and shall come (as the Advent Collect bids us to come) out of the kingdom of darkness, with all its dreary self-accusing remembrances of past failures and disappointment and the like, out of the very grave of man's ingratitude and disappointed hopes and frustrated anticipations, out of the very depth of the past, you shall arise and thank GOD for hope as the gift of GOD and part of the Christian's heritage.

Secondly, you will require holy fear. Hope is

like one wing, and holy fear the other, that bear us along ballasted and steady. Our course should be like that of a ship over the waters, ballasted with fear, borne on by hope. Holy fear is utterly different from natural slavish dread of punishment, utterly different from the idea of the bond-slave afraid of the taskmaster's lash, utterly different from what I continually have beheld, a terror, when the doctor says death is drawing near. Utterly different from terror is holy fear. Holy fear is more as the calm solemn reverence that obedient children have for the true parent.

Do you wish to know how this holy fear is to be gained? My brethren, the answer shall be practical, GOD helping me. Again, take your Bible, take the concordance, write down what GOD has said on fear. Thank GOD the HOLY SPIRIT that this too is part of your Christian heritage. And then put it down, and day by day, at every Communion and at every private devotion, ask GOD to give you, out of the bountiful grace and mercy of which to-day's collect speaks, this gift of holy fear. It shall come, for GOD hath said it.

Human words are as powerless to create it as human rhetoric is to enkindle Divine hope. I have seen men without a fear going from the church of GOD to spend a Sunday in a way that they knew was wrong, and I have been powerless to arrest them. I could only go on my knees and pray GOD that they might not die till they had had time to repent. While I have stood here and proclaimed death and judgement to come, GOD has sounded the great funeral knell through the parish, while soul after soul has passed out into the glorious light; and yet men are not afraid to laugh at GOD, to be halting between life and death, to tell you they make no profession of religion, and

that their light is not intended to shine before men. No, dear brethren, I may love you, and would to God I loved you more! I may pray for you, and would to God I prayed for you more! But I cannot give you holy fear.

You may hear every message of God, you may go on perfectly happy and perfectly contented, satisfied with outward philanthropy, occasional Communion, a little improvement since this time four years or seven years ago; and all the while it may be nothing but the intercession of the Church or the prayers of some who love you that is staying the voice from proclaiming that last sentence, "Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee." I may have said the very words of warning that you need, and yet I shall see you bright and happy, though you know you are not fit to die. Oh, brethren, how powerless is the preacher!

Dear brethren, to know this, to be filled with hope, to be filled with holy fear, you require to be quiet and still and alone with God. A few days ago I had a letter from a man, who said, "I shall be one and twenty on such a day, I have arranged to spend that day quietly; I know I am not living to God, I know I am not what I ought to be, and I want to be better. I wish to have that day alone with God, will you help me to spend it?" I saw him, I asked him no questions, except one or two; five minutes was the most that was required. But, if you had seen that man's face—he was a young fellow just like any of you here to-day—if you had seen him at night, so calm, so bright, so happy, so thankful! Oh, would to God you would just spend, at least one day, one day quietly with God!

"God be merciful to us and bless us; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance on us, and be gracious to us!"

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O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hast taught us in Thy Holy Word, that in an hour that we think not, the SON of Man cometh ; enable me, by the HOLY SPIRIT, so steadfastly and without all doubt to believe Thy Word, that I may ever live, as one who watches for the appearing of the LORD. Spare me, if it be Thy blessed will, the pains of death—send forth Thy angels to gather me to Thyself in the day of Thy glorious manifestation.

I know that Thou art ever near me. I know that at any moment the veil may be withdrawn, and that I may see Thee and know Thee, even as I am known of Thee. Let the thought of Thy appearing cheer me in every trial, and comfort me in every perplexity, and so uplift me above the things of time and sense, that I may in heart and mind ascend day by day, and with Thee continually dwell, O LORD my Saviour. Though I see Thee not, I desire to love Thee ; though I see Thee not, yet believing I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, glorious day, which may be so near, when the light shall break on the everlasting hills, when I shall see Thee and know Thee, and be able to love Thee with a perfect love in that everlasting and glorious kingdom, where Thou art with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, one GOD, world without end. Amen.

“Behold I come quickly.”

“Even so come, LORD JESUS.”

“O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

“Thou art coming, O my Saviour.”

“With Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name ; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : Glory be to Thee, O LORD most High. Amen.”

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