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The light of life

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

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SERMONS PREACHED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS

BY

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London

RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE

New York

E. & J. B. YOUNG & COMPANY

COOPER UNION, FOURTH AVENUE

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I Dedicate this Volume

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

EDWARD

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN

AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE OF THAT REVERENT AFFECTION

WHICH NONE WHO KNOW HIM CAN FAIL TO FEEL

TOWARDS A PRELATE

WHO LENDS SO BRIGHT A LUSTRE TO THE ANGLICAN BENCH

BY HIS CHARACTER OF EXALTED GOODNESS AND

HIS LIFE OF SELF-FORGETTING LOVE.

PREFACE

THE sermons in this volume were preached on various occasions. There is, however, one thread of connection running through them all, which is indicated by their title. There is, of course, nothing original about them. Their publication has been asked for by many who heard them. It would be pedantic and pretentious, in so slender a work, to attempt—even were it possible—to register all the debts the preacher owes to others from whom he has learnt, especially to those who are his chief teachers—the great Fathers of the Church; but it is possible and right to make grateful acknowledgment of suggestions received in several instances from the writings of Dr.

Liddon; and in many more from the writings of that great and serious teacher, and dear and honoured friend, the Very Rev. R. W. Church, the present Dean of S. Paul's.

It is hoped that this book may be of some help in keeping before the minds of any who may read it, the fact that He who is "the Light of Life" is not less needed or less to be found of those who seek, in this nineteenth century than He was in the First Age.

HOAR CROSS VICARAGE,
Michaelmas Day, 1888.

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SERMON I.

The Light of Life.

“Jesus spake unto them again, saying, I am the Light of the world: no man that followeth Me shall walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.”—S. JOHN viii. 12.

NO event recorded in history—it has been wisely said—can compare in importance to the coming into the world of Jesus Christ. Unnoticed as it was at the moment, more than any other fact in the records of mankind it has changed the face of the world.

This is undeniable. It does not require the faith and love of a Christian to recognize or acknowledge this. Men the most hostile to the claims of our great Master, most heartily opposed to the solemn truths relating to His purpose and work, feel the force of this fact.

Our Lord knew that it would be so. With all His humility, with all His gentleness, no teacher, no public man that ever lived, spent so much of his public opportunities in unflinching and determined self-assertion. He did not merely preach truths about another world, about God and man, about His

own plan and mission — He preached *Himself*. Christianity is a religion of belief in a Person, and in all the consequences which must follow from such belief. Of course, all this would be unaccountable on any supposition except the truth of the Catholic Faith. Once admit the Socinian mistake, and then the old dilemma is upon you. You have to suppose that imposture or folly—and imposture or folly, let it be added, on the most amazing scale—is the ground and source of power of the most striking Figure in history, the very spring and life-germ of the most beneficent and astounding revolution ever wrought in the checkered career of the human family.

Men never have answered, nor can answer, this difficulty. And we too, who worship and adore Him as our Lord and God, may learn more heartily to worship, more deeply and sincerely to love, if we allow our minds to dwell upon that striking aspect of His work—to which the history of the past eighteen centuries testifies—which He has placed before us Himself. He called Himself—and has not the event shown that He was justified in doing so?—the “Light of Life.”

I.

It seems to have been at the Feast of Tabernacles that the phrase was used. The gigantic lights, throwing a searching glare over the holy city,

were at a solemn moment lighted. They illuminated not only the Temple courts, but also the surrounding city and surrounding hills. They were meant to be a significant symbol of the Messiah's work and office. As in other things, so in this, the pride and worldliness of the Jewish people had blinded them to the meaning of their own system of religious symbolism. It was then, in the hearing of worshippers longing for something, hungering after they knew not what, that He Who alone could satisfy their cravings, Who alone can satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart, cried in their ears the true meaning of their symbols, proclaimed the fact, of the truth of which we are witnesses: "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life."

"The Light of Life!" My brethren, as we read these words, do not our hearts bound at such a proclamation, at such a promise? When once we waken up to think at all, how full of darkness is life! Many voices call us from different quarters, each assuring that *it* is the expression of truth. Perplexities in public life, perplexities in social problems, perplexities in the conduct of our daily duties, perplexities in the lives of others, perplexities in our own hearts; sorrows which cannot be accounted for nor assuaged; miseries which defy explanation or, apparently, justification, and which cannot be cured;

problems which seem to demand solution, and for which no solution can be found—not only the greedy idolatry of the gain-loving, the selfish hardness of the rich, the thoughtless indifference of the comfortable, the sadness and discontent of the poor, the wilfulness of the wayward who refuse guidance, the unreality, the sham lives of those who seem to be playing at a pantomime, the inscrutable misery of pain, the poignant anguish of bereavement, the haunting fear of coming disaster, the darkness, horror, and mystery of the grave—but also the depressing disappointment in ourselves, the wild uncontrolledness of our own hearts, the weaknesses and betrayals of our own wills, the failure of brightness, the failure of hope, the failure of wisdom, the failure of strength that once we over-confidently imagined to be ours;—this—this, brethren, surely, if life's experience teaches us anything—this, surely, in a world so dark and perplexing—fills us with a longing, deeper and stronger as the days go by, to find Him Whom to follow will be, not to “walk in darkness,” but to guide our conduct under the “Light of Life.”

II.

Walk on the central glacier of the Oberland in the gloom of a summer night. The gray clouds have hung about the Grimsel, and inflicted on you the sense of chill October, instead of bringing the sweet clear-

ness of an August afternoon. The night has gathered starless and cold; but you are bent on your journey, though it requires all the energy of your determination to carry you through the discomforts of the march. The path at first is sharp and stony, then it is steep—steep in descent, steep in ascent, and your already tired and aching feet make you feel that it is hard to know which is the worse of the two. However, you have passed the polluted moraine, and at last you are on the ice. How cold it is! The breeze comes sweeping down the glacier, and chills you to the bone. Onward you go. The clouds are clearing. Things are better. Star after star is plain above you, and the giant mountains tower grim and gaunt around you, but, at any rate, less wrapped in shrouds. Onward you go, taking more and more courage. What is that shaft of amber, clear and fine as polished steel? What that flash of deeper glory which shoots across the heavens? What is that line of scintillating gold and crimson which marks the crenulated crests of the mountains, and makes their snow-peaks and ice-lines like transparencies drenched in living fire? How glorious it is, the breaking of the dawn—the breaking of a real splendid August morning over the region of eternal snow! Gradually it steals down the slope of the mountains, till the very glacier itself is aglow. Now a world is before you, startling in its wildness and beauty—your graceful Finster Aar and savage

Schreckhorn, and Strahleck barrier, and then beyond, the soaring Eiger and the grim and meditative Mönch. Wild and beautiful in form and strangeness,—it is all before you now.

Ah! it was all there, in its strangeness and stateliness, even when you shivered in the mist and darkness. It was all before you; but to *you* it was useless, unperceived, unwondered at. You needed the magic of *light* to reveal it. You *know* what it is, though it was there before you knew it. You are a debtor to the tender mystery of the dawn.

Brethren, like that was Christ. How gently and secretly He stole upon the world! No one knew much of the birth at Bethlehem; but a first dawn of a new light had come. No one thought much of the ministry in Galilee or the teachings in Judæa; but truths which civilized man cannot part with were passing secretly from mind to mind. No one thought much of the teachings and sufferings of a Paul, a John, a Peter, a Polycarp, an Athanasius; but gradually over the civilized world was spreading an eternal empire. There was spreading on the "Light of the world."

Brethren, at the least, the depth of our ignorance is practically unfathomable. Here and now, in the toil of our probation, there is much we must be content *not* to know. And yet how the light has broken! What vast tracts of knowledge—knowledge

of the world, knowledge of one another, knowledge of ourselves, knowledge of our duties now and destinies hereafter—scarcely dreamt of, by the ablest and wisest of the ancients—are now our possessions since Christ came! Civilization is not founded on Christianity, but there is no denying how much it owes to it; a whole new world of moral thought has been opened up to reinvigorate and direct it. No thoughtful man can deny what a practical blessing that coming has been to us. Like the light, He has made it possible for us, in many directions, to see the way.

It may be said—it has been said—that Christianity is a religion of sadness; that the old Greek world, for certain, was a world of joy; that our path, then, has only been darkened by Him Who is the “Light of the world.”

Certainly, if you admire the character of the bird of the desert, who hides her head so as to deceive herself as to her destiny, *then*, but only then, you will think this true.

Christ *has* shown us much that is dark and severe in human destiny: but is it not wise to know the worst? And if He has, He has done so that we may avoid the region of darkness, and He has taught us at once our power and our duty to walk “as children of the day.”

III.

There are districts of truth which have been illuminated by our Lord, seen now very differently from the way in which anything was seen before.

(1) It was one remarkable result of our Master's mission, the light He threw upon old truths. It was a light, not clear and cold, but full of warmth and glow. Much that He spoke of had already been haunting the minds of thoughtful men beyond the confines of the chosen people; much also had been, in some degree or other, known to Israel. Christ came. He would no longer tolerate the walking in a land of shadows. He was in intense and unflagging earnest. What was false or wrong was either boldly condemned, or practically undermined, so that in the end it would inevitably fall. What was right or true had thrown into it a substance and reality it had never known before. And then, when men had been contented with a respect for the *letter* of a Divine ordinance, how authoritatively our Lord insisted on conscientious fulfilment of the spirit! When truth, also, had been in part unfolded, when earlier generations could not bear the full reality, how He drew out into clearness and completeness all that had been incomplete or half explained before! Think of His declarations on the absolutely indissoluble tie of marriage, on respect for parental authority, on the

relation, not of revenge, but of meekness and patience and fairness between man and man.

There was much, too, that all at once was not announced; but the first rays of His light were thrown upon it. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," was His own declaration; and by His Voice, through the Spirit in the Church, many things have been said—things on slavery, things on tolerance of others' mistakes, things on the depth and force of Holy Scripture, things on the meaning and certainty of the destinies of man, the dreadful-ness of sin, the fulness and readiness of forgiveness. Slowly but surely the sunlight has crept over the mountains; there has been first the breaking of the dawn, then the full brilliance of the day. Nothing—nothing is so remarkable in Christ as this calmness, and breadth, and depth, and increasing power and earnestness and reality in His revelations to His creatures.

(2) And then think of the light He threw on life by His moral teaching. It gathered up all the rays of scattered truth, but it had the force and brilliance of a fresh revelation. The love of God, the need to turn the whole mind and soul and will upon Him "as the Embodiment and Archetype of perfection;" the need to realize and act on the fact that our very being, our condition, our hopes, our destiny, come from His first loving us; the need to embrace, in the keeping of

this commandment, the fulfilment of all duties, seeing that *they* take sanctity and shape, seeing that life gains directness of purpose and singleness of aim only from this; the need of loving our neighbour "not more or less or otherwise than ourselves;" the need of seeing with the eye of love, of seeing a neighbour in every member of the human family, of sweeping away, accordingly, in the energy of love, all barriers erected by national distinction or social accident where they seemed to bar the path of kindness and consideration;—what a new light and warmth, what a glow of the midday after the breaking of the dawn, was this to a world chilled to the bone by the frosts of selfishness, separation, exclusiveness, and sin! Think how He insisted on self-denial; how He condemned all mere sheltering of self under self-interested motives and efforts; how, in consequence, He put His axe to the root of the tree of slavery, and made the first bold step in the path of the elevation of woman!

It was indeed a light! A light had come, showing the depth of human degradation and the blackness of human sin; a light to make the selfish and indifferent fear, and to give hope to the down-trodden and wretched, where darkness had been almost visible. It is true, too true, that there has been abundant disappointment in the failure, in later Christendom, fully to fulfil this promise. Yes, brethren; but putting at the worst all the evil that enemies can say of the Chris-

tian Church, we are in a world of far clearer light, and more warmth and helpfulness, than when Christ came. There is, indeed, plenty of selfishness, plenty of self-seeking, plenty of self-deceiving and cruel indifference to others' wants, among the rich and luxurious and comfortable; plenty of heart-stricken desolation among the struggling poor; plenty of evil all too victorious, and vileness all too unrestrained; but these things now cannot be without a constant witness against them, without a confession that they ought not to be, without an undertone of protest in the whole community, without voices of condemnation and efforts of counteraction in the Christian Church.

(3) And, then, think of the light that streamed from Christ's words and actions on the character of God. The awful majesty of Jehovah had been brought before the mind of Israel in the thunder of Sinai and the Shechinah of the Temple-worship. God's rule, God's providence, much of God's moral judgment, had been manifested by the earlier revelation; but these gave only an imperfect idea at once of God's exalted holiness and of His tender love until Christ came. The stern sayings, the stern acts of Christ, the severity of His warnings as to the future,—these brought vividly before men's minds the dreadfulness of sin, that essential dreadfulness which involved the most serious consequences; and *that* He here made clearer to mankind than otherwise it could have been, by the

sorrow and sufferings of the Cross. But, side by side with this, men saw that gracious Presence and heard those gracious words. Tenderness and compassion, kindness and pity, had never, never been known like this, and yet it was never for a moment dissevered from strength. Wherever He was seen, wherever He has left behind Him the sweet aroma of His loving words and self-denying acts, there men have learnt—learnt as the world had never known before—the beauty and goodness of God. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” Let us never, never forget it; we know, and only then can know, what our God is, when we contemplate the life of Christ.

“I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.”

(4) And then think what darkness men walked in, before Christ’s coming, on the subject of a future world!

Immortal man is too great to lose, for any lengthened time, some sense of his immortality. Some sense! But what a sense! How dim and saddening was the ancients’ view of the world of the future! At best a chill and twilight land, where sad shadows, not living persons, mourned over the happiness of a finally folded Past.¹

¹ Cf. J. B. Mozley, “Jewish and Heathen Conceptions of a Future State.”

A true, more definite, more fruitful view of another world came with Christ. It was not only that the whole scope of His teaching *required* for fulfilment immortal life; it was not merely that on the Mount of Transfiguration, and then in the garden of the Resurrection, He displayed His essential eternity, His power over death, the certainty of another world; but also in every act and word that touched upon a future, He treated it both as a definite, inevitable reality, and as having a close and practical relation to this scene of sense and time.

Men calling themselves Christians may henceforth view the doctrine of another life as speculative, if they please; they may choose to treat this life as final and rounded off in itself, as permitting them to use it as a thing apart just as their desires may prompt them; but if they do, brethren, if they do, they do it in defiance of Christ, they do it walking in darkness, and not following "the Light of Life." In the floods of light cast by our Master on the eternal future, how vastly He stimulated the energy, what leverage He gave to the working power of man, as man! More; how much has He deepened our respect for our nature, and in this, our thought for others' and our self-respect!

Man, alas! is so frail that he cannot—it has been often and wisely said—afford to sacrifice lightly any of those powerful motives which help him to be

earnest, diligent, sincere. When inclined, in proud isolation, to despise his fellow-creatures, to neglect their wants and aspirations; when tempted to fall below his better self by the wishes of self-interest, or the seductive attractions of sense and time, *how* great a power against the enemy he has when he knows—ay, *knows* deep in his heart,* from the revelation of his Master—that all souls are God's, that the future only is the true measure of the present, and that his effort and capacity for looking, with a steady eye upon that wide sweep of a heavenly horizon, is the truest witness to his further capacity for improvement in the science of goodness which is offered for his earnest study and diligent mastery now.

The "Light of Life" has streamed upon the eternal country. *This* life, under the light of our Master's teaching, is indeed little else than the vestibule of a heavenly temple—is of grave importance only as preparing us for that true sphere of our immortal action in the world to come.

IV.

Brethren, if we are honest, if we are thoughtful, we shall trace the rays of light from the Divine Word falling upon us through at least three media.

(1) We cannot conceal from ourselves that, however *civilization* may not have sprung from Christianity,

Christianity has made it a very different thing. There are points—who can doubt it?—in which the civilization of the ancient world was a match for or even surpassed our own. But how different now—so we have been reminded by a great and earnest teacher—is the sense of the value of liberty, its use and meaning! How different the consideration for others' needs and sorrows, the softening of the criminal law, the recognition of the dignity of humanity even in those condemned to just punishment! There are, of course, plenty of blots in Christendom—injustices which cry to Heaven for amendment and punishment. There are, even in Christendom, governments guilty of acts directly opposed to every law of Christ, and there are plenty of lesser injustices nearer home. Human nature is still a debased and fallen nature. Still, what a change! Think of the deepening sense of justice, the stronger desire to make reparation for wrong done, the greater readiness even in nations to acknowledge their mistakes, the keener feeling for goodness, and manliness, and truth, and purity which is evident even in modern civilization, with all its faults. Cold indeed must be our hearts, and purblind our eyes, if we do not, even here, see and feel and thank God for the light that He streamed upon us—the “Light of the world.”

(2) And, brethren—which of us can doubt it?—the light of Christ has streamed on our souls from the

Gospel. We do not read the Bible as we ought, we do not as we ought study the life of our Lord; but when we *do* read that sacred page, when we *do* study that marvellous Life, this we are sure of—that “never man spake like this Man;” that never life was lived like that Life; that here we are lifted into a land where there is no treaty with Night and her daughters; that however severe, or however gentle, or however strange be the sayings there, they find a mysterious response in our human nature. They warn, or teach, or comfort, or strengthen; but *always* they bring something which carries with it a sense of a higher world, and light to show us what to do and how to think.

(3) And then the light of Christ is streaming upon us in every teaching, every ordinance, every custom, of the Catholic Church. Does she sing her songs of praise, and toss her antiphonal Psalms from side to side by the voices of her white-robed choir? Does she offer us mysterious Sacraments, in form simple, in essence Divine? Does she encourage us to use sincere and serious confessions? Does she promise absolutions of far-reaching force? Does she ask us to join in acts of simple devotion, or in stately services where the sense of human sympathy imparts and utilizes the sense of the Divine Presence? What does it all mean? Light—light for another world, light streaming from a central Presence, more clear views of God’s mercy, and man’s misery and dignity, and the dread-

fulness of sin and the beauty of holiness ; landscape after landscape of an eternal country unfolded before us, and all glancing in the light that no man can *fully* approach unto—the “Light of Life.”

O Life, Life, Life ! the mysterious power, the mysterious blessing, which we enjoy to intoxication, which we mourn over to the verge of despair ! why waste it and lose it in the caverns of darkness, when we may make it eternally blessed and beautiful in “the Light of the Lord” ?

V.

And then, dear friends, practically we must remember that Christ’s light falls, searchingly, perfectly, on each single soul.

Why these heart-searchings ? Why these holy hopes and frightening fears ? Why these clear voices of truth and duty ? Why the sense of inner claim and inner comfort which come to each one of us once and again in our mortal life ?

The answer is—Christ. He makes Himself an inward Gift, and then, if only we will welcome Him, He illumines the soul.

It is striking, it is saddening, to notice in ancient literature how *outside* was the thought of man. Social, political—certainly, it was *that*—as we see in the remains of stately cities, in the statelier remains

of immortal literatures ; but *man's soul* was illumined only by Christ. Christ came, and since then we know that not the noblest building, not the loveliest music, not the sweetest poem, not the greatest production of human skill in literature or history—is to compare for wonder, for pathos, for grandeur, for tragic change, for the brightness of joy, for the darkness of sorrow, to the heart-breaking vicissitudes which are the accompaniments of human struggle found in any age in any single soul.

Christ revealed man to himself. He reveals us to ourselves. Oh that we may lay open our hearts to the rays of His penetrating radiance! Oh that we may here and now not shrink from the Light of Life!

Under that light, believe me, we shall see ourselves and tremble. Under that light, believe me, we shall see *Him* and love. When conscience reproves us, when new and better thoughts come to us, when old and holy enthusiasms revive in us, when deeper chords are struck in our hearts, when we are incited to better ways, loftier self-denials, truer and more faithful performances of duty, let us remember the Sun of Righteousness is rising, let us follow the "Light of Life."

VI.

We ought not to forget, I think, that Christ also said to His people, "Ye are the light of the world."

The many beauties and uses of light are reproduced for this world's help and comfort, by its reflection on bodies whence it does not originate. You shade your eyes from the sunlight above, but it flashes upwards upon you from the calm surface of the flowing river. Many a dark place is searched out and illumined by rays of light reflected, not direct. Christianity is a social religion. Christian life and character convert, illuminate, console many a darkened heart. If we are true to the "Light of Life," it is a thought at once stimulating and consoling, that we are not true *only* for our own benefit. If Christianity is to live and be widely beneficial in our age, for a world like ours, it must be by the truth, and beauty, and strength, and consistency of character found in those who are professing Christians. *We* are to carry on our Master's work. And one strong reason why we must try to look for and to be true to the light is, that each of us in our own sphere of work and duty may be an "alter Christus"—another Christ.

VII.

Certainly, for ourselves, dear friends, in the final judgment that light will be searching, and we shall know no escape from it. That is a solemn and terrible thought, helping us to earnestness, sincerity, fearless-

ness, self-control in thought and action, helping us to be faithful to truth.

Yes; but besides, there are moments in every life of pitiful, of almost paralyzing darkness. There are times of perplexity, when *how* to co-ordinate the varying claims of apparently conflicting duties into one line of serious and satisfied action we scarcely know. There are times of sorrow, when all our heavens are clouded, thickly clouded, and we can't, for tear-blinded eyes and hearts of mist and misery, see our way. There are times of penitential memory deeply depressing, when, with a sense of sin upon us sharp and searching, we enter into "the valley of the shadow." Which of us has not seen some beautiful life so clouded? Ah, dear friends! often it is to those whom God loves that He gives that secrecy, that discipline of darkness. Let them be faithful. Let them be faithful. Let them trust and cling, believe and try; and, looking from themselves heavenward, they will see the breaking of the morning, and hear the Voice of Him Who can bring brightness and peace to the weariest and most burdened, saying, in accents of calmness and comfort, "Let there be light."

SERMON II.

The Waiting Church.

“The day of the Lord will come.”—2 S. PET. iii. 10.

ADVENT has come again. It has come with all its usual power of appeal, with all its solemnity, with all its awe. Nature herself does much for the old Church season in these Northern climes. The gray skies, the falling rain, the coming and the going of the snow, the gathering clouds in splendid evening anger or in the wild glory of morning storm, the brown leafless woods clothed in the still afternoon with atmosphere of purple, the sudden mysterious flights of wandering birds, the long dark nights and the short gloomy days,—all fall in with the tone of a season in which solemnity almost passes into gloom.

Advent has come again. And it seems to suit with a special fitness the very tone and style of our English churches. These lines of stately columns; these soaring arches and groined roofs, carrying the eye up to a region of subdued light and gloom; these lofty win-

dows, where the sacred figures stand in mystic groups, with eyes and attitudes that tell of other times ;— all speak in a religious language grave and serious. Advent has come again.

And Advent seems to fall in naturally with the tone of English character. That character which owes so much of its attractiveness to its sincerity in valuing what is real and solid and genuine, to its sense of justice, to its simplicity and dislike of deceit ; that character which inclines to independence of mind, and love of liberty, and eager readiness for the fulfilment of duty, and the doing of hard work ; that character, in matters of religion, is inclined—and sometimes too much inclined—to a tone which is unduly solemn and even grim. And, indeed, no season so deeply appeals to natures specially alive to what is serious in religion, and to the terrible or splendid certainties and uncertainties of human life, as the season of Advent.

And so it is that, as we think over the Advents which are gone, we surely cannot fail each year to ask ourselves—What does *this* Advent mean to me? Dark and serious thoughts come with it, visions terrible and beautiful are wakened at its touch ; what have they or may they have, to do with *my* life ?

I.

And, indeed, such a question, in a kind of groping bewilderment, is sure at times to arise to the lips of thoughtful children of the Church. For there is something strange and almost obtrusive in the way these old Church seasons cut into our modern life. Outside in the world all is so constantly on the plane of the commonplace, and so tyrannically ruled by the sovereignty of custom, that *this* mysterious intruder must be treated in one of two ways—either as a mere ecclesiastical propriety outliving a once energetic custom—which we do not quarrel with, only because we tolerate it as a harmless but scarcely important survival of a buried Past—or else as a real voice, sounding by Divine Providence from the Church's lips, speaking in no uncertain sound, and meant to rouse to most important issues.

So, my brethren, we must view it. It comes with one proclamation, the significance of which is noway altered for us because the lower conditions of our life are changed from those of our forefathers in the past. Life and death, joy and sorrow, "the delight of our delighting, and the passion of our pain,"—these change not, but are still upon us, even as they were in the Apostolic and the Mediæval Church. Still we wake and sleep; still we love with passionate longing,

and sorrow with passionate despair ; still sweet to us are the voices of birds, and the breaking of dawn, and the love of woman, and the breath of flowers. None of the discoveries and inventions which have done so much to mark the advancing ages, and to put the trade-mark of progress on the civilization of our time, can touch these unchanging conditions of the sadness and tenderness of human life. So our cry—the cry of Advent—is as important and ought to be as rousing to us as it was in days gone by.

II.

That is the cry of the text.

“The Lord will come.” Nothing can be simpler, nothing surer, nothing in its consequences more moving. To the heart that clasps it with a living faith, life gains a fresh meaning. O awful and certain, O blessed and approaching fact! Here in Advent we seem to hear the beat of the unseen feet, and catch the first twinkling of the dawn, as we say to ourselves, with such a solemn sense as is awakened by our great cathedrals, with the impressions upon us of Nature in her winter garb, with the natural reverence of our English character, with all the faith and fear, yes, and thankfulness of a Christian, “The Lord will come.”

For, after all, this Advent answer seems just the wisest and the most needed when we begin to question ourselves on the meaning of life.

Look round. To far the greater number life means hard, even desperate, work; yes, none the less though every arrangement possible is made to smooth the path of the worker. Society falls into different ranks, and life here may be acted out accordingly.

Youth almost everywhere has *some* pleasures. The youth even of the darkest and most pitiful poverty still asserts some right and title to the *joy* of being. And then for those to whom life is fairly easy, it comes as a dream of beauty wafted on the wings of the morning. To us, the elder ones, the fair young faces bring back the dream for ever flown, when skies were always blue, and May was always May, and June was June. That is over. Life has become duty—not, indeed, without its deepening, solemnizing joy. To some, alas! it is a sadder business, and little else is seen to give it tone or colour, but only sorrow.

Or, think of the inequalities of opportunity. Some there are who seem to have everything made, so to speak, to their hand. What the sun and air, the sense of freedom, the culture of the mind, can give, that they have—health or wealth, and leisure and freedom from that gnawing care which pulls the highest things down to the level of the most uninteresting and mean. And then others rise before us. There

are those who, so to speak, have no chance. They appear to be heavily handicapped in the desperate race. No time is theirs for culture, scarcely time for thought. Work, work, work, seems the one thing they are made for; work in this overcrowded England—with all its weariness, and little or none of its joy. So we find ourselves face to face with startling, desolating contrasts. And then the outer gifts, though gifts they are, how seldom they seem to bring happiness in their train! You have the luxury and selfishness and discontent of the rich, as well as the grumbling and misery and poverty of the poor. Lives are lived of destructive sin or unproductive toil. Justice fails. Goodness is unsuccessful. Evil triumphs. There are many bright things in life, bright and happy, but more are sad. Need there is everywhere for something to redress the balance, to right the wronged, to bring light, if it may be, out of this ever-deepening darkness; and so the Church year by year, sustaining hope in the struggling, and warning evil-doers, cries in her Advent accents, "The Lord will come."

Life is altogether another matter, dear friends, when we place it under the light of "that day." Our Blessed Master is in every way "the Light of the world," and He throws a light on the lives of all of us by His continued warning and teaching that those lives must be lived in view of His coming.

S. Peter felt this; so did the world in his day.

Men who had seen the Lord felt certain of the truth of His teaching. Men who listened to those who had seen Him felt in some measure the same. But S. Peter, writing to console the Jews of the dispersion, writing to comfort and sustain those scattered congregations of Jewish Christians, everywhere hemmed in by unbelievers, and dispersed in the various provinces of the Lesser Asia, warned them that so it would not always be. Time would go on. It would seem more and more difficult to the human mind to grasp the reality of the life, and death, and mission, and revelation of Jesus Christ. Scoffers would come. They would point to the unchanging aspect of nature, to the universal reign of law, to the uninterrupted order of things; they would assert that all expectation had been disappointed, and, therefore, all hope of the coming was vain. With such the Apostle argues by anticipation. Once God *had* destroyed the world by water; there was nothing so strange in believing that once and for ever He would destroy it by fire. Anyhow, the Apostle reasserts the great assertion, "The Lord will come."

III.

That coming, brethren, has different aspects according to the teaching of Scripture.

Certainly it will be a day of terror. The mere

departure from all that is of custom, the mere fact of plunging into the unknown and untried, is never without its surroundings of sorrow or its phantoms of fear. But to be present when all that seems most lasting and solid is finally shaken to its destruction; to witness the winding-up of this order of things, so venerable in its antiquity, so rich in its memories of the past; to be a spectator of the Great Assize, where truth shall be declared without fear of mistake, and justice done without chance of partiality; to be not only a spectator but an actor, an intended actor, in that scene;—that will be, doubtless, to *assist* at a day of terror.

It has been truly asserted that there is nothing difficult to our reason, indeed, in contemplating the coming of the Lord; but to imagination the difficulty is irremovable. Poet, painter, preacher, dwell as they may upon the Divine declaration—with a view to give some representation of it—only end in showing how impossible is their task. The ceilings of the Sistine are alive with the stalwart and terrible forms of the genius of Angelo; Luca Signorelli and Orcagna have left a record of their thought of that dread scene on the roofs of Orvieto; the tender brush of Angelico has been dipped in the colour of pity and terror in the pictures which live and watch in Florence. All in vain! It distances all imagination, and defies the rarest and most energetic power of genius.

“Dies iræ, Dies illa!”—“Day of Wrath! O day of mourning!”—the words of the mediæval hymn are certainly accurate. We cannot forget its awful incidents as Christ has depicted them—the sounding trumpet, the cleaving heavens, the great white throne, the Judge terrible in truth and power, the ministering angels, the accusing fiends; and then the unnumbered multitudes, the exact and relentless division, the immeasurable joy, the woe unutterable. No; but these things are printed upon our minds, burnt into our hearts by every utterance of Scripture—first, that that is the end of this life; next, that it is certainly and steadily approaching; and third, that you and I shall be there.

Doubtless, also—and it is well to remember—it will be a day of relief and blessedness.

It is very terrible,—being such as we are,—to remember that *that* will be a day of truth. Yes, but it may be also blessed. God is not a tyrant bent on avenging; He is the Truth bent on vindicating. Each will be really judged according to reality, according to opportunity, according to fact. To be “in Christ” is to be of “the new creation.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” We know that, living by the faith of Him, we shall not be “ashamed at His appearing.”

IV.

Brethren, Advent is meant to keep *this* before us in all its terror if you like, but also in all its blessedness, in order that in the light of an event so wonderful and so certain we may guide our lives. To know the end and attitude of life is what we need; and, indeed, to know this end is to learn the attitude.

(1) Think, then, again—the coming of the Lord is the end of this life. It is remarkable how little Holy Scripture dwells on death *as such*. It is “against the day of wrath” that sinners “lay up wrath;” it is “the day” which shall make manifest “every man’s work;” it is “unto the day of redemption” that the Holy Spirit seals souls; it is the “approaching” of that day which is to make people more diligent in attendance at the ordinances of the Church; in this life we are to be “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” Men are to try to be “blameless in the day of God;” they are to look forward to “rejoice in the day of Christ;” the sinner at Corinth is to be subjected to punishment “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” And S. Paul looks forward for “the crown,” and trusts what he has committed to God “against that day.”

That will be the end of this life of probation and of purification—this life of God’s dealing with His

creatures here and in the region of the dead. Scripture is silent enough, indeed, Christ Himself is determinedly silent, on much regarding the state of the soul in the other world; but this we know, that with "that day" this long age of travail and mystery closes—that there "the curtain falls upon a scene" of joy unfathomed and of unutterable woe, and beyond it is the region of the unknown. This life ends in the coming of the judgment, in the certainty of punishment and the certainty of reward. "Here," it is well said, "the New Testament leaves us in darkness before the veil."¹

My brethren, whatever be that mysterious and tremendous life *beyond* the present, *this* life—of this we are certain—in its probation, in the mystery of its purification and waiting after death, ends in the coming of the Lord. "Look to the end."

"What manner of persons ought we not to be, looking for and hasting unto the day of God?"

(2) Consider again—this event, the closing scene of mystery and awe, is steadily approaching. It matters nothing to say that centuries have passed since the first proclamation, and that still "tarry the wheels of His chariot." It matters nothing that the scoffers scoff, and the worldly cease to remember. What do we know of the mystery of Time—that "phantom of succession"? We know, at least, that in the Divine

¹ Cf. R. W. Church, "Sin and Judgment."

Mind it is otherwise accounted of than in ours. With Him "a thousand years are as one day, one day as a thousand years." Life "fully possessed" is the attribute of the Awful and the Most Holy. What men call "slackness in His promise," or delay, is, if we had eyes to see such mysteries, only the long-suffering of God which cares for our salvation. He waits, as we call waiting; but this is but an aspect of mercy—there is no "waiting" with Him. The little scroll of years and years, of ages gone and centuries travelling on, of all the scene and groundwork of a million lives rolls up before His Presence; but for *us* the tick of time, the running of the sand-glass with its sand, the coming, growth, and fulness of the seasons, the buds of spring, the flowers of summer, the mellowing leaves of autumn, crisp and brown in their quiet opening grave, the sighing winds and falling snows of winter, each after each, laden with circumstance, charged with sorrow, dashed and darkened by sin, mean—what only we can measure by—that time is passing; that swift and sure, or slow and gradual—however we may phrase it in our ignorant reasoning—the end of all is at least steadily approaching, awful in its *steadiness* of advance, awful too in the uncertainty of its final presence—that Christ is coming, that "the day of the Lord will come."

(3) Or consider still—it is a scene in which certainly, most certainly, we shall share. Our Lord

keeps this before us directly or indirectly by that loftiness of aim and character which He shows, as though always having an eye steadily fixed on eternity in the midst of the things of time; by the short work He makes of mean motives and unworthy ends; by the high standard of truth and duty which He holds up unflinchingly before His followers.

Nothing, dear friends, is harder to realize, nothing more easy to believe, than our share in that last scene. It is certainly well at times, and especially in this season, to dwell upon it with earnestness and diligence. Amid the abundant forces of deceit in the human heart, amid the complicated treasons and weaknesses of the human will, the soul is wakened and braced to a sterner simplicity, a more possible truthfulness, a more unflagging activity, a loftier unworldliness, when once—oh, when once it sincerely remembers “the Lord will come”—will come to judge *me* with unerring exactness, if, as I trust, with unbounded mercy; and that that therefore must be for *me* the end towards which life ought to look. I cannot merely say He will come “to wind up His long account with His responsible creatures;” I can add—to wind up His account *with me*.

V.

And if such be the *end* of life, what, need we ask, must be its attitude ?

Our Lord leaves us in no shadow-land here. His whole earthly struggle, so noble, so compassionate, so suffering, was indeed *a looking forward*. In act and way and word He was revealing and enforcing all that Scripture had so insisted on as to the *waiting* of the soul. The attitude of those who earnestly live as having to die, having to be judged, is *waiting*.

It is startling, in a world where mere activity is made so much of, how constantly in Scripture *this* is insisted upon.

“Oh, rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him ;” “On Thee do I wait all the day long ;” “I waited for the Lord, He inclined unto me, He heard my complaint ;” “Our eyes wait on the Lord ;” “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Thee ;” “I will wait for the God of my salvation ;” “Lo, this is our Lord ; we have waited for Him, and He will come and save us ;” —such are the cries alike of Psalmist and Prophet, as their high affections, born of spiritual experience, awaken in them ; and such correspond with our Master’s teaching, “Be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.”

Brethren, how best may we wait for the Lord ?

(1) Doubtless by a life of prayer. For, indeed, it is prayer that not only wakens up the noblest faculties of our nature, but wakens them up so that all become powers to quicken the longing and waiting of the soul. It is prayer that keeps alive in us that solemn and blessed view of eternity, which makes it a practical fact with practical consequences.

How the soul hangs upon God in prayer! How deeply and truly it feels, then and there, that all is well; that, though the *dénouement* of life's sorrows, infirmities, anxieties, be long delayed, come it must faithfully and entirely! Certainly that attitude of the Christian life most fitting to the creature, in view of a coming judgment, is dependent much upon prayer.

(2) And, again, the waiting soul surely must enter in some measure into the depth of Eucharistic mystery. "To show the Lord's death *till He come*," was, we know on Apostolic authority, one reason of the institution of the Sacrament. The notion that the Sacrament was celebrated to remind *us* of Christ, is a notion with no basis either in reason or revelation; but it *is* a part of Christian revelation that the Church, struggling and waiting, should assail the throne of grace by pleading and showing the merits of the Redeemer, should move God by the Passion of His dear Son, should avail itself of "the powers of the world to come," and "show the Lord's death till He come."

(3) But chiefly what is to be remembered is that waiting is an attitude of the soul. How much Christianity insists upon quietude and patience as a spiritual *power*, comes out to our minds only when we contrast its teaching with the habit of the pre-Christian world. Patience in the world of heathen culture was little else than a weakness unworthy of any but a coward or a slave. The Stoic philosophy may, indeed, have taught a semblance of it in the dogged indifference which it preached as a gospel; but all the sunshine and light was gone. To endure doggedly, because life *must* be full of trouble, found its basis and motive in a pride as far removed as it is possible to imagine from the humility of a Christian.

For "to wait" is in some measure to realize the relation of the creature to the Creator. Yes, it is to realize the relation *and* the distance. To live under the eye of an unseen Creator is at least to know something of our *real* condition. Catch a glimpse of the sun in his noonday glory, and then return to the darkened prison cell, and you know what darkness means. Catch even a glimpse of the life of a saintly person, and you begin to feel your own failures, and to have a first hint of your own insufficiency. Catch even a glimpse of God's glory—of goodness perfect, justice unerring, love without frontiers, mercy unfathomable—and you begin to realize the abysmal depth of your utter nothingness. See the vision of

an approaching self-revealing Creator, and the creature begins to learn humility.

Humility is another name for reality; and it is, therefore, the basis of a spiritual life.

But more; when once the idea of sin and the idea of God have struck the human soul, then it *must* feel that Christ will come. A judgment—not necessarily, through His mercy, a condemnation, thank God—becomes inevitable. We know not till the end, in Scripture phrase, “whether we are loved or hated.” We cannot, if we are “waiting,” be otherwise than possessed with a holy hope, but a not less holy fear. We cannot but feel the need of an ever-deepening humility.

And “to wait” is to deepen—surely it is to deepen—in “inwardness” of soul.

Always men work and act from without *or* from within. The old world was enwrapped by “outwardness.” We know too well how much we tend to the same; how much this “outward scene of sense and time” fills the eye and deafens the ear. And that is why S. John is so emphatic on the necessity of unrelenting quarrel with “the world.” S. Peter, after his early misunderstanding of his Master’s mission, after the unforgotten scene in the palace of Caiaphas on that tremendous night, must have felt the same. He, too, could feel how strong is the necessity for the soul to draw its inspiration from an

eternal world, how unchanging the need to be illuminated by the "Light of Life." To sink into the depths of light and teaching which come from Christ; to measure life in its demands and restraints by an altogether other standard than that supplied by society; to live the inward life of meditation, recollection, self-forgetting, and prayer, as well as, as a real support of, the outward life of active duty;—this—this, surely, is "to wait."

Further, the whole tone and temper of sincere Christianity is involved in the same. There is a certain patient self-restraint, a certain equable and just and honestly balanced temper, which holds the soul back from rash judgments and premature decisions, which creates large-heartedness and gives to others the due of their dignity, which saves from continuous fretting and the gnawing of a murmuring mind; all which results from "judging nothing—really *nothing*—before the time," and keeps the soul in fair-attuned and well-adjusted balance; and this is meant by "waiting" for the Lord.

If humility be the basis of spiritual life, dear brethren, then, surely,—as theologians remind us—perseverance is the crown. "To persevere unto the end" is, we know, on the best authority, to be "saved." This, like other things, is a grace given by God—a grace for which we should always pray. And this going on and on in patient round of duty, in

steady energy of love, in constantly encouraged habit of self-forgetting, in continual dependence upon God; this going on and on in patient practice of prayer and Sacrament, in holy thought and calm but true repentance; this going on and on in steady effort to reproduce in our own souls, to forward in the souls of others, the image, the dominion of Christ;—this, surely, is *the* attitude of the Christian; this is “to wait” for the Lord.

VI.

So far we have remembered the duty of faithful attention to direct ordinances or spiritual teachings of the Church. But, brethren, more than this, the coming of the Lord reminds us that “waiting,” in a Christian sense, implies the earnest cultivation of a type of character. Only those of a seriously religious mind can in any sense expect sincerely to welcome the King.

That inner life, which leaves us steadily “waiting,” is a life of solid supernatural motives, and sincere and persevering purpose. We cannot, indeed, reproduce in detail the lofty life of the New Testament; and certainly at times we are staggered by the chasm which seems to yawn between those ages of Apostolic love and simplicity and devotion and our own times.

Things are, indeed, very different. The world *has*

told upon the Church. There have been failures, disappointments, treasons, which have left behind them saddening landmarks; there have been contests, the scars and wounds of which are still in evidence—alas! still unhealed. New circumstances have demanded fresh adjustments, and earnest men have trembled lest compromises and arrangements may have drained the heart's blood from religion. Still, there is no mistaking the fact that a definite view of life outside and of its conduct within is taught by the New Testament, and that, amid whatever sorrow, *this* has been loved and preserved in the Church.

There is still required of us a real religiousness of mind, a real submission of our own will to the Will of God, a real recognition of His call and claim. Still we have to find real life supported by communion with our Heavenly Father maintained as *the* fact and force of last importance. Still there must be a strife against that truthlessness of mind and heart which undermines character; against that covetousness which makes of the soul a temple of idols; against that luxurious surrender to a life of immediate sensation and passing pleasure which destroys the inner taste for the Divine kingdom.

Still truth must be grasped with unswerving conviction; still man, in the importance of his dignity and destiny, must be dealt with in real seriousness.

It is still our duty to be watchful in treating sin,

whether in ourselves or others, as the crowning disaster in any human soul. Strength is still a duty—strength and tenderness; the fair and simple mind, the sincere heart, the humble estimate of self, the loving thought of others. Still we must strive and pray to keep before us, as *the* Object of the heart's deepest affection, and *the* Model of our human strength, Christ our Master, in all the awful glory and beauty of His goodness, and His unstinted self-sacrifice.

Few of us, dear friends, but know too well how inadequate our efforts, how feeble the result. Still, to keep before us the Will of God and the teachings and commands of our Master, as the standard by which to measure and correct our actions; still to try with some reality of surrender to rule our hearts and lives by the law of Christ,—this, surely, is to be deepening in that inner religiousness of character which is a "waiting for" the King.

VII.

But surely, to wait for His coming supremely and beyond all else, implies a very earnest cultivation of the virtue of Hope. We do not think of this enough; we do not enough realize here our duty. And yet never was there a time when on the one hand we had more ground for hope, and on the other more need

of it. Life is now so full, so hurrying; advancing civilization has brought so much that is questionable and distressing; many of our fellow-creatures spend so much of life in ways strange and saddening from their absence of joy and help; so great are the sins of our great cities—so wayward and wilful and passion-driven the young, so full of doubt, or worldliness, or disregard of God, the older—that we are inclined at times, in the sheer fret and worry of life, to sink into apathy, or sinful acquiescence, or heartbroken despair. Brethren, this is wrong. “Iniquity” may “abound,” and “the love of many wax cold;” but that itself is even a token of His coming. There have been darker times and sadder lives and a drearier outlook, and He never yet has failed His people.

Then, too, see the power and eagerness of His Church. Right and left of us, always and everywhere, the forces which make for the advance of goodness, for the alleviation of suffering, for the defence of truth, are stronger and more earnest than they were. We have souls of devotion and minds of power, wills of energy at work in the Church. The “Religious Life” has been revived with results of astonishing blessedness; the Priesthood have more sense of their great calling; the Episcopate have shown themselves more unworldly; the laity have been less suspicious, and more vigorous to help and second all efforts for the advance of the Faith.

Certainly, in the midst of this tremendous and mysterious age of Faith and Sin, we Christians are bound to reawaken and nourish within us the great moral force of Hope.

And each for ourselves, each with our own sorrow and our own responsibility—is not the same for each of us true ?

Which of us, indeed, can fathom or understand the special trials of any other soul ? But this is sure—if “the clouds return after the rain,” it is only that they may be broken and dispersed at the breaking of the dawn. To believe in the All-loving and All-glorious is to be sure that “whom He loveth He chasteneth,” and that all is “working together for good to them that love God.”

Think, then, think that the time is coming—coming more surely than to-morrow’s dawn—when sorrow shall no more be in the halls of the weepers, when partings shall cease, and tried hearts be broken no more. Think—it is difficult, it is possible, it is coming—the time when *you*, if you will, shall be freed from sin ; when the pangs of conscience shall have ceased to gnaw, and the power of temptation to distress and scare ; when dark hours shall never recur, and evil dreams cast no cloud on your heaven ; when there will be no weariness in prayer, no hanging back in duty, no flagging in work ; when rest and labour shall be convertible expressions, and service require no

effort, and virtue make no demand to swim against the stream. Think when all the mystery of apprehensions shall have faded into thin and shadowy nothings; when all the confidence of love and joy of blessedness and goodness shall make the very texture of your life.

Yet for this Christ died. This—there is no mistaking it—Christ promised. Oh! beyond all conception of imagination, beyond all flight of the most gifted fancy, is that future life; but with all the unspeakable brilliancy of its promises, if we will it is ours.

To set this hope before us constantly is a duty. Brethren, to do so may be a joy. To set before us what is our intended dignity is to nerve the mind to purer purpose, and the will to more unflagging effort? “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love Him.” “We having received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear”—the Godly Fear that strengthens a holy Hope.

The years roll on, time passes for us all, the clouds sweep across our heaven, the sunlight breaks and fades and passes away, the flowers open, young children sing, the birds are in the forest, and sunbeams dance upon the stream. The severe unalterable mountains now gaze in fierce wintry attitudes of anger, now smile enwrapped in robe of summer glow. Fair faces smile

and fade. Warm hands clasp, then relax and grow chill. All is forward, solemn movement, and yet we still are here. But we too are moving on.

“It is not time that flies;
’Tis we, ’tis we, are flying!
It is not life that dies;
’Tis we, ’tis we, are dying!
Time and eternity are one,
Time is eternity begun;
Our life can know no dying.”

Therefore, oh therefore, let us look with eyes of trust, let us look with a determined hopefulness, which sheds a cheery sunlight on all we do, onward to “the city that hath foundations.” So, only so, shall we act worthily of our great destiny; so, only so, shall we make our lives fruitful and blessed; so, only so, shall we advance with Christ in the conquest of evil towards the triumph of goodness; so, only so, do we worthily “wait for the Lord.”

SERMON III.

The Mystery of His Coming.

“ He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth.”—Ps. lxxii. 6 (Prayer Book).

THE Psalms are the Church's manual of devotion. They are so because they rise from a spring of the deepest religious affections, and also from a source of inexhaustible revelation. There is the revelation, not merely of fact and doctrine under their ordinary aspect, but of the deeper and more delicate relations of God and the soul, and the many moods of devotional feeling and desire in which the human spirit, eye to eye with its Creator, can but find expression for its wants and longings.

There is no condition of human want and human joy or sorrow which *they* do not meet and express. They are mystical with S. John of the Cross, full of tender submission and strong faith with Thomas à Kempis, ablaze with passionate wish or sorrow with S. Augustine in his spiritual struggle and sustained repentance. They touch the deepest chords in human

hearts, and fall in with all situations with an unparalleled adaptability. The morning of the storm when danger is near, the evening of stillness when the breeze ripples in the corn, the breaking dawn of purity and splendour, the lonely night of desolation and darkness, the time of full human happiness, the hour of racking human pain,—always and everywhere these find solace or strengthening in this volume of sublimest poetry and prayer; and always and everywhere they find such solace because they are in this book confronted with, consoled by, God.

It is this passion of the soul for God which makes the Book of Psalms so universal in its power and beauty; for, indeed, dear friends, “the soul is by nature Christian;” indeed, “religion is the passion of humanity;” indeed, amid all our sins and failures, what we need and long for most certainly and truly is—God.

And so, too, when we study the Psalms under the light of any doctrine of the Faith, their power and inspiration are pressed upon the mind. He Who is “the Light of the world” taught His servants—Psalms and Prophets—and so they speak of Him. The mystery of prayer, the sweetness of meditation, the secret communion of God with the soul of His creature, the awful and blessed power of the Eucharist, the source and greatness of the Church’s destiny—above all, the coming, the life, the Passion, the triumph

of the Church's Lord,—these spring up before the eye illuminated by faith, and are everywhere found in the Psalms.

I.

Now, here is the short inspired and accurate description of the coming of the Saviour: "He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

The Psalm is Solomon's; of that there is no reasonable doubt. As David his father was type and teacher of Christ in his suffering and struggling life, so Solomon was, in the aspect of our Master's life, as King ruling in righteousness, and Prince of Peace.

The Psalm proclaims "the King." And nowhere is the feebleness and impossibility of the Socinian mistake so plain as in this Psalm. Christ as God is always here. S. Paul, indeed, distinctly states that it is so, and the illuminated mind of the Church in every age has seen the same. Here in this Psalm is the King—Almighty, Immortal, Omniscient—in Himself, and from Himself the Source of blessing, which knows no ending even with the close of time. His government is spiritual, and the result is righteousness and peace, tender compassion, and the saving of His people. Everywhere He is to be a Source of joy, and on and on, as roll the waves of time, His Name

shall be borne, calling forth love and praise. The heads of revelation on the kingdom and character of Christ are summarized here; here, too, we are not left without the sign and teaching of His coming. "He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

II.

Brethren, it is this reference to His character and coming which makes such a Psalm appropriate to Christmas Day. The Latin Church saw in it a fitness for Epiphany teaching; also it was used for Trinity Sunday; but the Old English use especially appropriated its teaching to Christmas Day.

There is no festival of the Church's year which comes to us in so many aspects. The simplicity and humiliation of our Blessed Master seem to be the signal for an outburst of dogmatic teaching and of enthusiastic praise. Every scene of the day is filled with the awful and eternal nature of Him Who lies in the manger. As the Prophet spoke of "the Child" being "born" to us, only to go on heaping upon Him the most awful and overwhelming of titles—Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—so to-day the Church, guided by Isaiah and S. John, keeps our eye fixed on the helpless Infant, and our heart full of the Eternal King.

And yet awful and mystical as is such a festival, strange as the vision is which it opens up into the depths of God's eternity and the abysses of His love, yet also it is the simplest of all.

We all know it is the home festival. Now families meet, and old friends return. Now a simple, quiet human gladness comes in some way to every heart. We English people have ever loved our Christmas, because the thoughts which circle round it are so full of the power and beauty of that which is so dear to us—the life of home.

As years go on, indeed, the brightness of old Christmas mornings is flecked with clouds. We cannot, dear friends, we cannot, any one of us, reach as far as middle life without feeling that memories often very sad are the presences most pressing on us on Christmas Day. And yet it has a simple joy. It is the festival of the children, and this sad world would indeed be sad and dark were it not for the songs of the birds, and the colours of the flowers, and the fair faces and cheery voices of the children. And so it is that none of us is

"So dark in memory or sad at heart,
At such a distance from his youth in hope,"

as to forget on Christmas Day the joy of the children, and to forget that that joy is due to Christ.

Very mysterious, very moving it is, when we feel that the deepest and the simplest things in life lie

side by side. Yet so it is. The drifting of a cloud, the sweet smell of a flower, the curling foam-spray on a rising wave, the sighing whisper of a rising wind, the deep and touching sadness of the sobbing sea, the low moan in the patient waiting woods, the twinkling sunlight on the laurel leaves, the little redbreast singing in the winter hedge, the call of curlews in the darkening morn, the strain of music in the dead of night, the stray phrase of some old forgotten song, the silent mystery of the church aisle when the winter day is drawing down, the fallen leaf, the faded flower, the half-obliterated phrase in an old letter strangely found, the shaft of light in some grand unexpected dawn, the flush of an unknown face in a crowded street, the whisper of a word or two of love in the summer evening woods,—how simple in themselves, how full of power to stir our deepest souls! Oh, strange, sad, human heart! how deep its springs of life and sorrow! How near the simplest things lie to the loftiest truths! How these and such things fill the heart with anguish and the eyes with tears!

Now, so it is at Christmas-tide. Nothing so simple, nothing so grand, as the Christ, at once our King and Child! Nothing so high in unmeasured heights of dim elevation, and so near the simple tenderness of our own fireside! O great, dear Christ! In a world so full of tragedy, where life straining for

dignity only becomes a moral farce; where show is everything, and outward look serves but to hide a hollowness within,—O great, dear Christ, sweet are Thy methods of teaching us reality! The grandeur of Truth and Simplicity is here. “He came down like the rain into a fleece of wool, and even as the drops that water the earth.”

III.

Well, first, looking only at this aspect of the Christmas revelation, notice the silence of the coming of Christ.

Thoughtful teachers have often reminded us that there is something awful and mysterious in silence.¹ In what serene and solemn silence this solid earth has been formed! Ages upon ages have passed, either when the materials of our world were being melted in burning fire, or when the ice-plough was smoothing down the rocks and opening up the valleys among the mountains; ages upon ages when, layer over layer, the heavy reefs of stones were laid to form the basements of the everlasting hills. Slowly but surely the adamantine work went on, while Nature, in the throes of her birth and building up, was growing on in silence. In silence Nature now does her yearly regulated work. The fields lie dead, clad in their

¹ *E.g.* cf. Dr. Martineau, “On Silence.”

winter snow ; the trees stand waiting, brown and leafless, their solemn network of branches traced across the golden evening sky. Day after day goes by. At last a power of life, silent but certain, thrills, throbs, through Nature's nerves. There is a movement, there is an outbursting. Life has revived once more ; shielded by a silence unbroken, beautiful, Spring has come again !

Silently the summer flowers and forests settle to their autumn sleep. So still, so still, these funeral days of Nature ; you *hear* the silence almost, and start at the cawing of the rook or the barking of the distant dog. Silently the morning comes. One moment, and all is gray and sombre, like the face when death is hastening on ; then first one and then another streak of glory, like arrows shot by an unseen hand, are glanced across the early morning sky. It is the breaking of the dawn.

Awful, too, the silence of God. Age after age men have wondered, cried, and prayed, and sinned ; they have longed to know, and failed of knowledge ; longed to feel the touch of love, and missed the feeling. Huge portentous acts of tyranny have been done ; lives in multitudes swept onward from birth to death, in suffering unavenged or sorrow unassuaged. Men have groaned and hoped and feared. " Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O Thou Holy One of Israel ! " Awful was the silence of God. " O Lord,

keep not still silence!" was the cry of the orphan and the longing. At last God spoke His Word—His Eternal Word—spoke in Christ; spoke to the world such a word as the world needed and had never heard before. And yet that very Word had an awful silence about it. "He came down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

All great things come in silence. For often silence implies power without parade. It evidences the vigour of reality in contrast to the mere appearance of things. It is an outcome of those vast forces of passive virtue which are the strongest things in the soul. For moral strength is not of the market-place or the street; it does not strive or cry. It has nothing exciting or full of movement to recommend it to the eye or ear. It is clothed in robes of silence; and so, when it speaks its speech is strong. The sense of power in reserve is the most imperious of all things, and it is the golden clasp of silence which holds it in reserve.

I hope, dear friends, this will not be taken to give the faintest shade of approval to the mere practice of silence from moroseness, or distaste to taking trouble. I am speaking of its mystery and power. Of course, as in other good things, there is its abuse. "There is a time to speak" as well as "a time to keep silence." Speech is at least of silver, if silence is golden; and that silver should be often found, and shining too with the glory of a bright and loving heart. But

silence is golden; it is the power of its mysterious energy which gives nerve and lasting force to speech.

In silence we come by our truest thoughts; in silence we form our wisest and strongest resolves; in silence we feel our bitterest pangs of sorrow; in silence we drink our deepest draughts of joy; in silence we touch the depths of repentance; in silence we feel the real blessedness of peace. Yes, and sympathetic souls often in silence hold intercourse in that unspoken language, which is the channel of truest interchange of thought from soul to soul.

Christ came in silence. It is true the herald Angels sang His coming, but it was only the poor shepherds on the hillside who heard the singing. If amid the music of the spheres the star advanced to mark His manger, only the Wise Men saw its guiding light. To the world at large, amid the hubbub of the cities, and the cries of sufferers, and the laughter of the boisterous, and the constant noise and movement of an ordinary working world, no ear could catch the tread of the unseen feet, and hear Him come.

Only He *had* come. There He was, the second Adam, the Chief and Reviver of a ruined race. There He was, adored by His saintly Mother, adored by His holy foster-father, recognized by Simeon, rejoiced in by Anna. To the poor and simple, the few watchers and waiters, He was known; but deep had been the silence of the coming, and the world could not realize His

awful Presence. "He had come down like rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

IV.

"Even as the drops that water the earth." Yes, it was not only a silent mystery. It was the greatest change ever known in human history. It was the most deep-reaching of revolutions. It was the making of barren places fruitful, and the saving of mankind.

There is, indeed, something strange and startling in the view left us of the old world before our Master came. We find it hard to strain our imagination so as to realize what actually was. And yet it was a great and wonderful world.

The Roman satirists and historians have left us a picture of the Empire in its external unrelenting power, in its internal moral and social corruptions, as the crown and consummation of the old world.

What man could do without God—here was the outcome of it, and that outcome at its highest power. Philosophers and thinkers, serious or trifling, earnest or despairing, had been for quite five hundred years propounding theories of morality, and speculative systems for the guidance of the conduct of life. They were good, bad, or indifferent. There were in them shreds of real light and vast expanses of darkness. But, light

or dark, they were theories, speculations, guesses at truth—that only. They were not solid convictions; they stood on no certain truth.

The wise and serious saw, they could not fail to see, the hollowness and folly of the popularly accepted system of religious practice or tradition. Dimly they dreamt of God. Never could they grasp, at best even, the fact of a personal God—a Father, a Creator, a Judge, a Friend. How impossible to conceive of Cato or Cicero exclaiming with a Psalmist's rapture, "O God, Thou art my God!" how impossible to imagine them entering into the comfort and dependence of the prayer of a Christian child!

Losing God, they had, of course, lost man. To us the thought is terrible of losing the individual dignity, and then the sense of brotherhood, in man. Man to a Roman statesman meant part of the commonwealth, and nothing more. His value to the state was in *his* eyes his real value. Hence came indifference to human life, indifference to human duty, and the loss, the necessary, the inevitable loss, of those high and noble human affections—sense of love, of loyalty, of union, of dependence; sense of the sweet ministries in which our common life is so rich—of the tenderness of father to child, of the support and reverence of child to father, of the chivalry and devotion of lover to lover, of the helpfulness and sympathy between friend and friend, which, in fact, in a world of flitting fancies,

and fading ambitions, and dread uncertainties, and certainties more dread and awful still, make life worth living. All this was gone.

In the region of virtue it was still the same story. There were virtues, and there were noble and striking lives. Cicero's despondency, and the lofty wail of Tacitus over the grave of Agricola, open to us depths of noble aspirations never satisfied; still at best it was "the natural man" in the higher moods. The cardinal virtues were the highest possibility of the comparatively few who had not abandoned themselves to the pressure of despair or the maddest intoxication of sin.

And as for a future! Well, it is hard to believe the human soul such a traitor to itself as to abandon all thought, however dim, of a life beyond the grave. But that old world of weary men and women had practically none. No vision of a better country solaced the dark hours of the nobler souls who felt the yoke of the corruption of "the present evil life;" no firm conviction of emancipation; no "sure and certain hope." At best the fitting figures of shadowy ghosts in a sad twilight land across the grave, and perhaps, to the weariest, the despairing thought of somehow being out of all that seemed so purposeless and inane!

But, indeed, though there was a sense of perplexity and weariness, though, as citizens, there was a sense

of crime, there was no real sense of sin ; none of that sense of blight and separation which the illuminated human soul knows, parted by sin from God. And as for help—what hope beyond the dreams of human effort when face to face with evil and temptation ? Help there seemed none.

Man had lost himself and lost his God. And losing them, the world was one inextricable labyrinth, one standing, present, unsolved enigma, “without God, without hope in the world.”

“It is always the darkest the hour before day.” The sun rose ! Christ came ! Christ came, and all was changed. Some power had entered into human life. Like the spring process of nature, slowly but surely it began to creep through the weakened nerves of a fainting humanity. Christ came ; the leaven began to work. Henceforth the powers of evil had to reckon with a living force of change and progress. Henceforth men had to deal with the Catholic Church.

Yes, brethren, yes—in spite of the dark streaks across our advancing Christendom—a new power was in the world ; a higher level of life was gradually being created. The power of Sacraments, the power of grace, the power of prayer, the fact of sanctity,—these came henceforth as the forces of a root-and-branch revolution. Christ had come.

To men in the ancient Israel who had looked for a Deliverer, He gave a new standard of discipline and

devotional life ; to men in the outer world He brought new forces, and a fresh hope full of immortality. The power of Satan was not broken, but it was relaxed. The "strong man" had kept his city, and his goods had been in deadly peace. A Stronger now had entered the lists against him. Henceforth there was war—manly and persistent war. Christ had come. The old world *felt* a new Deliverer.

"The oracles were dumb ;
 No voice or hideous hum
 Ran through the archèd roof in words deceiving !
 Apollo from his shrine
 Could no more divine
 With hollow shriek the heights of Delphi leaving."

The great revolution had set in ; the new power was at work. Man was to be no more the puppet of perplexing circumstances. The new Adam brought new life, new light, to humanity.

Christ had come. "He descended like rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

V.

What, then, shall be the results of this Christmas light to ourselves ?

(1) First remember the sacredness of the soul. This is taught us by the silent coming of Christ. There is that at the roots of our human nature of

passion and desire which is shielded by silence. It may be the channel of noble emotion, it may be the fire that devastates our being; but its use and exaltation depends in large measure on the inner silence of the soul about it, the refusing to converse with itself on such solemn and perilous mysteries, the protecting of them from evil by a lofty forgetfulness. Purity is often guarded by the inner silence of the Christ in man.

And when the awful sins, hideous and destructive, which dog the steps of fallen nature must be dealt with, only, only under sacred sanctions, only in the quiet seriousness of confession and prayer, with the solemn sense of how in touching them we may be nearing the realms of light, can they be dealt with well.

And in the deep and lofty things faced by the soul in its intercourse with God, the prevailing feelings must be love and awe. We dare not talk of our deepest feelings before the crowd, unless by call of absolute duty, and even then not without some sense of pain. It is the birth-throe of a telling truth, needed to be spoken—a birth-throe full of anguish, when the silence *must* be broken.

Guard in reverent silence the sacred things of the soul. < It is not the religion that is most glibly spoken of which is the deepest. < It is often the quiet soul which is the truest. > It is not in religion the man

➤ full of words" who preaches with the prospects of eternal honour. ↙ Here indeed "there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak," and those who most respect God and themselves will be the most frank and fearless of speech when for their own souls they need the ministrations of Christ and His Church.

(2) And again, may we not remember that to have Christ come to us is to have a great change? "Behold, I make all things new." To put God first, to recognize the dignity and sacredness of our fellow-men, to learn to hate our deepest sins, to love to fruitful purpose the loftiest demands of truth and duty,—this must mean a change within us like the change of the arid ground when the freshening showers have fallen. Open the heart to Him. Let Him do His work. "He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth."

(3) And further, surely Advent must not be allowed to close, and Christmas to come and go, without, in thought, in prayer, in resolution, recognizing more deeply, more earnestly, our personal relation to Christ our Lord. We have on Christmas Day the life of adoration. The deeper His humiliation, the more He deserves our homage. If so He has emptied Himself for our sakes, shall we not pray for more self-forgetting in our religion, that we may more truly glorify

Him? Worship in all its solemn unselfishness, is a teaching for all of us on Christmas Day.

(4) And more, truly there sinks into our hearts deeply and tenderly the meaning of a life of love. "Loved me, gave Himself for *me*," was the Apostolic cry of astonishment and thanksgiving; a cry to be wrung from the heart as truly by the manger of Bethlehem as on Calvary beneath the shadow of the Cross. Think of it. Think of it under the nightly stars of Christmas, and within earshot of the clang of Christmas bells. "Loved me." "Unto *us*" it is "a Child is born;" "unto *us*" it is "a Son is given." The love of Jesus is indeed the heart of sincere Christianity, and *that* approaches us in the tenderest vestments, the swaddling-clothes of the helpless baby Boy, as we think of Jesus on our Christmas night.

(5) And then there is the lesson of the "good will," the heart sound and thorough, sincere and watchful, eager and true towards God; and of the peaceful disposition towards men. He has entered our ranks. The Christ is here. Gently and tenderly, "as rain upon the fleece of wool," He came—came to do all good, like "the rain that watereth the earth." Can we not do the same? Where is the room for *readiness* to find fault? Where for the irritable temper, always in a state to be provoked and to complain? Where for the vindictive temper, never ready to forgive? Where for that first tendency, alas! so often found, to think

unkindly of others, instead of the desire to find in them the Christ?

Brethren, Christmas again recalls us to the opening of this religion which we profess, by which we hope to be saved. Years roll on, but nothing changes the awfulness, the tenderness, the patience, of Christ. Years roll on, but nothing modifies the sacred claim of duty on a Christian. Years roll on, but nothing renders the world less in need of the energy and power of that spotless Life. Still there is need of His tenderness; still of His simplicity; still of the awful certainty of His silent, unflagging holiness and love; still there is need of "the rain that watereth the earth." How can His work be done unless we are faithful to the life and help of Bethlehem? O Blessed and Awful One! give us grace, water still our dry and thirsty souls.

We gaze at Bethlehem; let us turn to fulfil its teachings. Let us, in silent awe and firmer purpose, renew our loyalty to the advance of goodness, renew our fealty to the kingdom of Christ.

SERMON IV.

The Divine Kingdom.

“After that John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.”—S. MARK i. 14, 15.

SUCH is the authoritative announcement from the lips of the King Himself of the coming, in more definite form, of the Divine kingdom which had been so long and in such various ways foretold. Prophets had spoken of it in their strange or severe, in their joyous or mystic, language. Psalmists had sung of it, and in the midst of their sorrows *this* had been to them a ground of hope and joy. The chosen people had ever been looking for it, first very dimly, and then, in its form and manner, under a great misapprehension. Still, there it was, a living thought, capable of firing enthusiasm and quickening hope. And when the young and marvellous Prophet came preaching in Galilee, how must the heart of the people have bounded with joy when He told them that what had been long looked for was at last coming—that the kingdom of God was at hand!

An idea, an idea which possesses the heart of the people, is a force of greater strength to produce results than any form of physical power. And if any idea had ever possessed and moulded the minds of a people, it was the idea of a coming kingdom and a conquering King in the minds of Israel. The idea had really grown, and grown in richness and in exactness of form, in the inspired minds of their teachers; but in the mind of the nation it had, as we know, assumed a misshapen form. Still it advanced, and when all were waiting and hoping, very secretly the kingdom came. Whether we look at the Birth of the King, or at His definite acts of proclaiming and founding, still it certainly was without those signs of power which are looked for, and naturally, in "the kingdoms of the world." It had come, in its form and potency, in a degree never known before, when Christ was born; and now, when His great mission of teaching, attracting, working, suffering, was to begin, there was to be in all He did a further and fuller manifestation of the Divine kingdom.

Christ is "the Light of the world." Light is well said to have a power, like music, of opening up whole regions of joy and pathos, of waking feelings of infinite variety and special charm, for which no words can find expression. Our Blessed Master shed light upon the nature of God, His inner life, His special character, not so much by definite description as by

act and allusion—by what *must* be if all He did and said was at once Human and Divine—guaranteed, as it all has been in its infallible authority, by the crowning miracle of the Resurrection. So also He did in His acts and words, which pointed to the full development of the Divine kingdom. Men had naturally an idea of kingly rule. They had to learn that that was but a shadow of a special form of Divine government, like but unlike. Christianity is sometimes treated as the exposition of a new philosophy, sometimes as a *congeries* of precepts and principles of which men may usefully avail themselves according to their individual tastes and needs, sometimes as an interesting and startling historical phenomenon with which the student of human development is bound to reckon. Christianity is more than all these ; it is a Religion—a Religion bound up with a Character, a Person, a Life. Now here it is the proclamation and final establishment of a real kingdom,—in which a sceptre is swayed by an invisible hand—in the minds, and wills, and consciences, and affections of responsible beings—of thinking, feeling, self-determining, suffering, loving, living men.

I.

And first, brethren, let us ask what are some of the prominent and general characteristics of the Kingdom

established by Christ, and swaying, under His supremacy, the souls of men.

Well, clearly it was to be a kingdom of moral and spiritual persons. Its purpose was the training men under a law of goodness for a blessed end.

The Bible may be said to be, from first to last, the teaching, the exaltation, of righteousness. In the checkered history which it embraces, this is an unchanging theme. Scattered lights of God's revelation gleam through all literature; for the Eternal Word is, indeed, "the Light that lighteneth *every man* that cometh into the world." But no literature like the Bible—and the Bible, be it remembered, is a *literature*, not a book—has so persistently and consistently witnessed to this. To show the excellency of goodness, the misery of evil, the consequences which inevitably dog the steps of sin; to show, amidst whatever failing hopes and heart-breaking *fiascos*, that right as right is the law, the only true law, of human advance and human happiness;—this is the changeless undertone heard faintly or clearly under the stories and teachings of the sacred Scriptures. In the simple and honest stories of patriarchal times, in the vicissitudes of fortune, in the record of the chosen people, in the plaintive lines and passionate longings and triumphant strains of the Psalmists, in the terrible wrath and heart-piercing tenderness of the Hebrew Prophets, it is ever the same. The advance of

righteousness, the triumphs of goodness, the development of man's highest hopes, and only true destiny, by his submission to the Law of righteousness—that is, of the code of the Divine kingdom,—these were taught everywhere, always, and by all.

Then Christ came. And then the moral Law, instead of losing anything of its exacting demands or severe rebukes and teachings, is filled out with a meaning which it is necessary for all men to understand. The Sermon on the Mount, the stray teachings of His different missions,—these are engaged in laying down a Law of righteousness by which men are to submit to be ruled. The Beatitudes, sketches of the true path to that for which humanity is ever yearning—the true path to happiness—always exhibit it as found in moral goodness, in high and beautiful and possible spiritual virtues. And the acts of the Lawgiver corresponding with His teachings never swerve from the same theme. The laws of the kingdom are laws of tremendous and exacting goodness. The subjects of the kingdom, if they love, are to show it by learning to obey. Christ lays down laws for His subjects. The kingdom is a kingdom of moral power and moral demand. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, His countenance beholdeth the thing that is just.”

“A King shall rule in righteousness.” It is a kingdom glorifying, exalting, demanding homage to right as right.

And, again, the Divine kingdom is to know no frontiers either in place or time. In strange and shadowy sketches, in tones of mystic half-expressive music, by type and figure and allusion, this had been long foretold; and then He came and worked *in* our nature, but evidently for all. He was "a Light to lighten the nations," as well as "the Glory of His people Israel." The acts He did were broadly human, as well as full of Divine power and Divine compassion; the lessons He taught, nay, the very words He uttered, had force and helpfulness, not for one people, but for man as man; the unveilings of the Divine Will which He presented to the mind were for all men; the character which He impressed upon the minds of those He companied with in the flesh was a character of balanced perfection and rounded completeness, fitted as an ideal for the race; the ordinances He bequeathed to His followers were ordinances suitable for all; and then the emphatic injunction, ere He left them, was to His Apostles to "make disciples of all nations," and to teach them "to observe and do all that He commanded" them. There was nothing temporary or local in the sovereignty He founded; it was to be a universal kingdom for every region of the habitable world, stretching through all the ages of the history of man.

And more; it stretched beyond the confines of this scene of sense and time. Precepts, teachings, prin-

inciples, implied and required Eternity for their full application. Horizon beyond horizon was faintly descried in ever-increasing and unearthly loveliness in all He said or left unsaid, taught or declined to teach. His direct and distinct claim stretches far into other worlds. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth," was a claim of absolute sovereignty in the regions of the blessed, in the realm of the dead as well as among the families of living men. No one has ever, as Christ, claimed and implied such boundless power. The *Divine* kingdom knew no frontier in space and time.

And further, it was to be a personal dominion. No words could sufficiently express the nearness of the person and rule of the King with the lives and very inner souls of His subjects. His kingdom was to be Himself in action. No distant monarch distantly to be adored, but a King pervading His kingdom, ever present, ever waiting, ever giving laws, ever assisting in their fulfilment. All sorts of means and methods, of channels and agencies, indeed, He established to carry out His work; but they were not to be agencies by which the King was to work from a distance, but modes of His manifestation and His intimate and unflagging energetic life.

The throne of the King Himself was to be set up in every life, and in the details of choice and act of each separate soul, and so the living whole was to be, by

the power of the Divine Agent—the Blessed Spirit—an expression and manifestation of Himself. Real Presence, Personal energy, Personally energetic power,—these are watchwords of the Divine kingdom.

II.

In this its fullest sense, dear friends, when Christ preached His mission in Galilee, “the kingdom of God was at hand.”

And thus in this world, in this scene of probation, in this man’s sphere of work and trial, he established as His executive and the witness and sign of His presence, the Holy Catholic Church. Sunday by Sunday, in a solemn moment, you are in the habit—are you not?—of proclaiming before men and Angels your interest in, assent and consent to, you are used to make your act of faith in,—the Holy Catholic Church. And yet, outside the Church door, the chances are, were you asked your faith in relation to this life and to another world, you would scarcely proclaim yourself “a Catholic,” but use some title singularly inadequate and most misleading, instead of your true description as a member of the Divine kingdom.

When you name the sacred title “Catholic,” mists of blinding passion seem to sweep up from the swamps of scornful and half-stagnant controversies, and to

blind your eyes. You associate the term, it may be, with the great family quarrel in the Western Church ; you mix it up with visions of corruption and cruelty, of worldly ambition invading and defiling the sanctuary, of interference with liberty, of dominating tyranny, of national struggle—of every miserable *accident*, in fact, which has found a place in those battles in Christendom where human weakness or human sin has interfered with the spiritual sway of Christ. Possibly you imagine that the name represents mere membership in the Latin Church, and the use of it implies disloyalty to your own part of Christendom—as though, when you name any of our stately cathedrals, you merely meant a porch, or a transept, or a crypt. No part can be taken for the whole. And with all your just love for your own dear Church of England, you must take a larger, a higher view of your dignity and your destiny, and remember that, if you rejoice in your place in the Divine kingdom, you may glory in the name of “Catholic.”

For, indeed, it is a dangerous and scarcely moral custom to use sacred words in sacred moments whose meaning you do not care to realize, and to which you are at no pains to be loyal in the ordinary hour of common life. Call yourself fearlessly, but with a religious sense of the responsibility and blessedness of your practice, a “Catholic”—a member, a servant,

of that part of the Divine kingdom which is to you its witness, representative, executive, here on earth.

When Christ preached His mission in Galilee, He proclaimed the approaching foundation of the Catholic Church.

Think what you mean. The Catholic Church is a great society. Christ came to found a society, not to write a book. Would you know the Divine revelation of the Gospel, you begin by learning your Creed. What the Church has witnessed in every part of her Apostolically constituted body in all ages and now—this is the Catholic Faith. Every society has its marks, its notes, its tokens; every society has its condition of membership. This is a society of souls. The clergy are not the Church; they are its ministers, its servants, exercising from its Founder certain delegated offices in the power of His abiding Presence. The common expression—now happily passing away—of a young man “going into the Church,” when he sought the dignity of Holy Orders, was a witness to a strange confusion of thought. “Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.”

This great society has had a checkered history. It is Human as well as Divine. It has been scorned, ridiculed, despised, as an upstart sect. It has taken its place as almost a worldly power. It has interweaved itself with human history. It has risen and fallen, flagged and been vigorous in the fulfilment of

its mission here and there, but all along its strange and eventful story it has also been the witness and keeper of Holy Writ, the guardian and proclaimer of the Faith, the storehouse and channel of grace, the ark and home of souls.

Learn of it the Faith, learn from its hands the sacred Scriptures, study them under its guidance, illumined by the Creeds given to it by the Divine Spirit, and you find in every page of Scripture the Catholic Faith. Indeed, so doing, you are then, and only then, true to the teaching of the Bible; for it proclaims in no uncertain accents that "the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth."

Do otherwise—pardon me if I use a homely phrase: put the cart before the horse—treat the sacred Scriptures as though they had fallen from Heaven into your hands ready printed and bound, use them to pick out for yourself—with no reference to the guidance of the Church which guards them—what you will and what you will not accept as the truth, and you will land inevitably in some department of half-belief or unbelieving. You will be a sceptic, or a freethinker, or a Baptist, or a Socinian, or a Wesleyan, or a What-not. You will pick and cling to one ray of light or tract of shadow, you will select one atom of glorious glass from the Church's emblazoned window in which shines the Christ, but the Christ as a whole you will have failed to see before you. You

will have missed the Catholic Faith. Every heresy or half-belief arises from selecting and exaggerating some one part of the revealed faith to the neglect of the whole, and this from neglecting the Scripture command to "hear the Church."

We shall not, dear friends, feel this to be a hard and lifeless method if once we remember that Christ is never away from His Church. For the Church is not only a society, much less a philanthropic or improving institution; the Church is "the Body of Christ," and its life is life because it is in union with Christ, Who is its Head, and the "Light of Life."

III.

The marks of the Catholic Body are stated full plainly in the Creed.

(1) The first of these marks is *unity*. As time has gone on, and as human ambition or human passion has wounded and marred the Church's Body—as they wounded the Body of her Lord on the Cross—there have been divergencies on this and that. Some parts have exaggerated the meaning of pious opinions; some have underestimated their value; but throughout the Catholic Church there is unity in "the Faith." Go where you will, in Latin, in Anglican, in Eastern Christendom, you hear the Church's living voice pro-

claiming the one Faith in the majestic strains of the Creed of Nicæa. Church of France, Church of Spain, Church of Italy, Church of Russia, Church of Greece, Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church of America,—whatever territorial name you assign to parts of the Body, and whether in close and external communion with the Anglican, the Roman, the Eastern Church, you find the living voice proclaiming “the Faith once for all delivered” in the Nicene Creed.

The same is true of the unity of Sacramental life. Everywhere the regenerate soul is knit into Christ, puts on Christ by the “one Baptism for the remission of sins;” everywhere the souls of the faithful are offered, for “their spiritual food and sustenance,” the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Unity thus arises from being united to the one great Head, the invisible and ever-present Christ. No difference of time or clime, none of the quarrels in God’s family which have wounded the Body and marred or interrupted visible communion, are able to prevail against the blessed certainty that all are having the “sinful body made clean by His Body, and the soul washed in His precious Blood,” and have the power offered them by which they may remain “evermore one with Him, and He with them.”

Blessed, consoling thought, brethren, amidst the contentions of Christendom, that the powers of a substantial unity are placed at the disposal of all.

(2) And the Catholic Church is *holy*. At first hearing, this appears a strange statement, for we know too well that there have been many baptized into the universal Church whose lives have been sinful, and sinful in a very serious degree. But, indeed, our Master foretold this. He warned us that the field must be one of tares as well as wheat; He taught us that in the net there would be fish of every kind; and He foresaw the mistake that earnest men would make, and therefore forbade us to forestall the last great division, teaching us that we must wait for that until the hour of His own unerring judgment, when He Who knoweth the secrets of men's hearts will give an unerring award. The Baptists, of all sects, are the most consistent and logical of Puritans. It is not merely that they return to an ancient custom of Eastern climates by the use of immersion, but it is the mistake "that the Church was intended by its Author to be a social, and not an educational society;" that, in short, it is "a select and *exclusive* circle" of those who are each and all perfected, "instead of a broad and *inclusive* 'net' for sweeping in all of every kind."¹ No, brethren, every member of the Catholic Church is not "holy" in the full sense of that high and awful word; but the Catholic Church is holy, because of the holiness of its great Head, Christ our Lord, Who is the Source and Spring of holiness, and Who guides and governs it by His

¹ Cf. G. H. Curteis, "Bampton Lectures."

Holy Spirit; holy in her teachings; holy in the end she places before her—the glory of God, and the sanctification and beatitude of man; holy in her moral precepts, her propagation and support of the moral Law; holy in the power of her teaching, aided by the Blessed Spirit, to sanctify souls; holy in a multitude of the peers of the kingdom—the blessed and saintly who have attained to holiness; holy, in fact, in the source and reason of her being, and in the means and end and aim of her work.

The Creed of Nicæa carries us on.

(3) The Church is *Catholic*, as we have already seen. She is for all times and all races. She is the representative of the Divine kingdom, whose function is restrained by no lapse of ages, and stretches far beyond the limits of immeasurable space. Let us, therefore, always remember that if we love our dear English Church, it is, it should be, not because she is consonant with the tone of our national life; not because she has a history which records her services in the making and supporting the best that belongs to us as a splendid empire; not because Kings and Parliaments have honoured her, feeling their obligations to her, or insulted her in the foolish self-deceiving notion that she—who created them—owes to them her life; but because she is that part of the Catholic Church which in God's providence has a Divine mission to the people of our race. If we

mourn when some have committed the serious mistake of leaving her for other parts of the Catholic fold, let us mourn first because the human faults which have marred her Divine beauty have often led her children's hearts to fail, and because those who have not remained under her ministrations have sought the Faith and Sacraments in other parts of the Body than that in which God's call and providence had placed them.

(4) And lastly, still following the Nicene definition, the Church is *Apostolic*. The ministers of the true Church are in three orders—mystic reminder of the triune life of God—of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Tracing up their commission from step to step, we find they received it from the holy Apostles, who themselves were gifted by Christ with that mission and that honour which, as Representative of our humanity, and as our Mediator and as Head of the Church, He received from His Father's hands. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." There is no guarantee for ministerial authority which can command the sanction at once of common sense and Scripture except succession from the Apostles of Christ. No man is a judge in an English law court by virtue of adopting, of his own motion, the insignia of office. He must derive his power from the Crown. No man is a minister of the Catholic Church merely from an inner persuasion of his fitness, or because

an assembly of ministers of some society of modern foundation have "called" him to such an office; but only because he has received, from authority possessing gifts handed on from Christ and His Apostles, the grace of Orders to fulfil such a function in the Church. "No man *taketh* this honour to himself but he that is called" and sent.

And she is Apostolic by reason of handing on the Apostles' doctrine, binding the faithful together in their fellowship with Christ the Head, handing down their tradition of the Sacraments, and calling Christians to the worship of God in the use of Apostolic Creed and prayer. She "continues steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers."

Thinking of this, we may realize the blessing, the unspeakable blessing, of being Catholics—children of the Universal Church.

IV.

Brethren, it has been implied—has it not?—that there are distinct conditions of membership in the Catholic Church.

(1) To be a member of the Catholic Church we must be baptized with water, and in the Name of the Holy Trinity. There may be good people who

are not baptized—good people who have been most faithful to the natural virtues God has given them, to the light with which He has enlightened their consciences from time to time; but one gift they have not had—that seed of supernatural life which is theologically called “regeneration.” In our society they are not members; they are not members of the Catholic Church. There may be bad people who have received the grace of regeneration. It is sorrowful, it is heart-breaking. But a hand does not cease to be part of your body because it is paralyzed, nor your son cease to be your son because he is undutiful. The unworthy child of the Church needs the grace of repentance to revive him into life, needs a complete surrender to his Father’s claims to reawaken him into dutiful obedience. Men have ventured to doubt or disbelieve the teaching of the Church and her great Head on Holy Baptism. We English, it has been said, are half-Pelagian. We can’t bear to think of God acting in His sovereign grace without our vigorous co-operation. We doubt *free grace*; we find it hard to acknowledge the regeneration of an infant, partly because we confuse in our minds two actions of the Divine Spirit—regeneration and conversion—partly because we forget that *the* blessed truth is not that *we* accept Christ, but that *Christ* accepts us. Nevertheless, it remains true that the entrance into the supernatural society which we call the Catholic

Church, the entrance into the Body which is the representative and token of the Divine kingdom on earth, is by Holy Baptism. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter in*."

(2) And as time goes on the grace of Baptism must be fostered by prayer, and the soul, awaking to full mental consciousness, must willingly submit to God, must willingly surrender to His claims, must willingly in purpose and desire substitute God's Will for its own in the ordering of life—must, in fact, be *converted*. Conversion may be gradual, as often in holy souls who do not sin away the grace of Baptism, but develop it by God's aid; or it may—it has been—what we should call sudden. "God fulfils Himself in many ways." But there is no fulness of "entering in" unless we "be converted and become as little children;" there is no completeness of loyal and loving and fruitful sonship unless we surrender to the workings of the grace of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they"—in the completed and blessed sense of sonship—"they are the sons of God." A good deal, often sentimental, often very foolish, has been written about conversion. What you mean, freed from all perplexing verbiage, is this, that if you are to be a true Christian you must be trying to serve God and do right: that is the beginning, middle, and end of the whole matter.

(3) Of course, also, for abiding and fruitful member-

ship in the Catholic Church, there is needed "the profession with the lips of, and the assent with the heart" to, "the Faith." "Habitual faith," as theologians call it, may be enough for infants of immature years, but to "them who by reason of use" have grown to age of responsible will and understanding "actual faith" is necessary; they must adhere with heart and understanding to the truth witnessed to and taught by the Church. Refusing this, many become heretics with wilful stubbornness, *i.e.* those who pick and choose; or apostates, *i.e.* those who abandon and deny. On such is left the mark of their Baptism, but in them life is paralyzed.

(4) And for full and fruitful membership there is need to recognize the authority, and use the ministrations of the appointed ministry. Our Master has established an ordered kingdom, and the use of His appointed ministrations is the use of Himself.

(5) And hence also, for that full and fruitful membership, we must take our share in the Holy Sacraments and the appointed blessings of the Church. To be excommunicate from them, or wilfully to excommunicate ourselves, is to be living with—for us—the blessings and gifts of our heavenly heritage in practical abeyance.

Such, dear friends, from one point of view, is that glorious Body into which by Baptism you are born

of God. With awe and fear, with holy joy and humble reverence, be thankful that you are Catholics, and act accordingly.

V.

Yes, act accordingly. We shall not waste our time if we remember some of the duties which lie upon us. For privilege implies duty. And neglect of duty and lost opportunity is always an occasion of falling.

(1) Surely, surely, it is our duty, while holding the truth in unswerving steadfastness, to cultivate that large and loving spirit which also becomes members of the Catholic Church. We should then long and pray for the restoration in all parts, of external communion, and we should try to cultivate that fairness of mind and moderation of speech which, coming from the love of God, may be *our* contribution to an end so ardently to be desired. A terrible quarrel in a family does not make it cease to be a family. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

It may be true that the Latin part of Western Christendom has unhappily exaggerated or misplaced the office and functions of the Roman Bishop; but while we refuse to endorse Roman exaggerations as being untrue to the Catholic Church, we are not un-Christian for trying rather to remember the good

deeds than to dwell upon the evil, with which we ought to credit the patriarchal chair of Western Christendom, which has been called the Holy See. Among the Popes have been great sinners, but also there have been great saints. We who look with affectionate veneration to the chair of S. Augustine of Canterbury, cannot as Christians despise or scorn the chair of S. Gregory of Rome.

It may be true that the Roman Church has dangerously and unhappily exaggerated the office of her whom our Church, with the rest of Christendom, gracefully and respectfully calls "Our Lady;" but have we ourselves not too often forgotten the reverent love due to the Mother of the Lord? We are bound to be firm against that which is un-Catholic, for we are bound to be loyal to Christ; but we do not act disloyally in trying to dwell rather upon the evidences of His Presence in any part of His Body, than on the wounds inflicted by His enemy which have marred His work. Rome has set us a good example in her loyalty to His Sacraments, and her practical sense of the needs of her people in the devotional life. She has done us some ill turns, for in a family quarrel there are embittered tempers, but she has done us many a good turn too; and we are not less like our Master, if we cease from the bitter words and unbalanced assertions of a cruel controversy, and dwell with love and thankfulness upon all that is good.

Take care to love your own Church loyally and perseveringly; but don't, dear friends, allow yourselves to speak bitterly and scornfully of your brethren in the Catholic family who are in the Roman Communion.

It may be true that in the great Eastern Communion life has often appeared to us stiff and formal and fossilized; that men have clung to "the letter" with such pertinacity that they have failed to rise to "the spirit." It may have much that seems to our Teutonic tempers formal or even grotesque. But anyhow, it has carried out at least one immense mission effort; at least the Russian peasant, living under probably the worst government which has ever disgraced Christendom, finds his comfort in this life and his hope in another in the loving ministrations of his Church. At least—witness the long years of suffering of the Greeks, witness also their successful struggle for liberty—no Priesthood like the Greek Priesthood have ever been so loyal to their flocks, the debased, the down-trodden, the poor; no Church like the Greek Church has ever, through evil report and good report, so stood by the people in their sorrows, and so won the undying affection of their hearts.¹ Is not that a mark of Christ? There have been times when here in England it has appeared to be too lightly thought that anything at the altar—slovenliness and ugliness

¹ Cf. R. W. Church on Christianity and the Greek Races.

—was good enough for the Divine Victim. Not so in the Eastern Communion, there the soul is impressed in the Eucharistic worship as nowhere else in Christendom, not so much with the practical spirit of S. Paul and S. Peter, as with the mystical spirit of S. John; there, as nowhere else perhaps, with breathless awe, and heart and eyes where the tears are springing, do we feel that the Priests of the Catholic Church are “celebrating the Divine mysteries.”

Ah! it is a joy to a Christian soul to recognize and realize the special gifts of God in *every* part of the Catholic Church.

And towards those whom we call “Dissenters” remember the same generous and Catholic spirit. At least for the most part they have been baptized—it may be irregularly, but still validly, and if validly baptized have at least *entered* the Catholic Body. If they have not continued in full and fruitful membership, how often has the fault been our own!

There were times among us of laziness and worldliness and narrowness, when real earnestness—uninstructed, but real—was almost *driven* into the ranks of Dissent. If they seem sometimes bitter or narrow, remember also how often they are generous and good. They are under great loss. Without an Apostolic ministry, without, therefore, true Sacraments, *formally* they are not part of the Catholic Body; but the Divine kingdom transcends the limits of the Catholic Church,

and where, through no fault of their own, they are losing the blessings of full membership, it may perhaps be said of them in the words of a great teacher—speaking in a kind of paradox—“there are those in the soul who are not in the body.” Blessed, blessed to Christian hearts, will be the day when our separated brethren come home to their true mother, and we can only hasten that day by our own prayers and loving spirit, by decision *and* charity, by ourselves living in the true temper of the Catholic Church.

In one word, instead of dwelling upon the faults of our brother, let repentance and reform—like charity—“begin at home.” If Rome has exceeded, we have underestimated, the truth. We have at times put on the air of a Puritan or Protestant Establishment. We have at least appeared to condone some deadening errors of modern Protestantism, instead of living faithfully by the traditions handed on in the Prayer-book, and remembering our place in the Catholic Church. Why, there are still Catholic Priests in the English Church who conduct themselves like Protestant ministers, or in manners not unfitting for a layman, but most unfitting for them! There are still Catholic Churches in this land where, after all the blessed revival which God the Holy Spirit has graciously given us, the sacred mysteries are treated almost like a common and occasionally convenient thing. There are still English Catholics who treat the teachings of the

Church—even Priests who treat the witness of the Prayer-book, to which they are bound by solemn oath—as if these were pieces of outworn antiquarian furniture, possibly to be admired or merely to be amused at!

Let us be persistent and loving. Our own dear Church, with whatever faults, we may loyally love, because her witness is clear, even if some of her children ignore or neglect it; she is part of the great Catholic Body, and such as her faults are, they often have arisen from a temper of fear of display, fear of unreality, fear of overstatement, love of a restrained and truthful temple, which is, thank God, a passion, though sometimes an undisciplined and unregulated passion, in our dear England.

(2) And again, when “Church troubles” come, take comfort. The Church is not the Establishment. She may be pillaged and rendered poor to-morrow. It would be a loss to the nation, a dishonour to God, a serious sin in those who did it, and a probable means of crippling her usefulness; but her power is a supernatural power—it comes from her place in the Catholic Church. Lawsuits may break Christian charity. Priests may be imprisoned for obeying the Prayer-book, but privy councils and law courts are not the strength of the Church of England. She, in God’s mercy, will outlive them all. She is living in multitudes of the brave and faithful, who in the distant

Colonies of our mighty Empire are her noble-hearted children, though not enjoying any privilege of "establishment." The life of her Lord is in her; she is part of the Catholic Church.

(3) And further, my brethren, above all we must take care that, in a spirit not unworthy of the rites of our Catholic Mother, we have to live and work. Ah! by His grace, by His merits, Who died for you, let there be in *your* souls the traits that you find in *her*. *One* with your Lord by living surrender, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;" wide, generous, loving in spirit, "as your Father in Heaven is perfect," and with a self-restraint, a simplicity, an unearthliness of temper such as graced the times of Apostolic fervour; "*in* the world, but not *of* the world;" using all things as not abusing them;—these are your marks of Catholic fellowship. "The kingdom of God is within you."

(4) And finally, dear friends, time is passing, eternity is coming. The kingdom of God, the Divine kingdom, stretches far beyond the limits of the Catholic Church. Here and now we are in probation. Here and now we are being trained for the full exercise of a life with Him. Live, O Catholic soul, in the practical, loving, awe-stricken, hopeful remembrance—rather anticipation—of that moment when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ."

SERMON V.¹

The Secret of Religion.

“ O God, Thou art my God ; early will I seek Thee.”—Ps. lxxiii. 1.

THE Psalms are the manual of devotion of the Christian Church. They are endeared to every devout soul because of their truth, their depth, their wide-reaching fitness to every want and need, their tender pathos, their lofty flights of thought and desire—because, above all, they are ever dealing with the close and tender relation of the human soul to the God Who made it.

They are what they are because they are the result of a deep and varied spiritual experience, because their inspiration comes from the teaching Spirit, because they show the thought of the Eternal Word, because they are modes of bringing to play on man—his destiny and duty—“the Light of life.”

This Psalm, as you know, dear friends, is almost certainly from David’s own head and heart. It is a

¹ Preached on the first Sunday of the New Year.

Psalm of solemnity and sorrow. The greatest trial of the king's checkered life was upon him. His people were deserting him; his friends, many of them, standing aloof; his kingdom seemed to be passing from him; and, worst and cruellest sorrow of all, all this was so because Absalom, his darling child, was in open rebellion.

David was leaving Zion. Behind him was that Olivet which guarded and overlooked the holy city. He was entering on the desert land eastward of Judæa, and preparing for the flight beyond the Jordan. All seemed at its darkest; everywhere disaster and disappointment. It would have been natural, most natural, one of those failings of heart to which all of us are subject in the dark hour of life—natural, most natural—that with a failing heart should come a murmuring tongue; we should hardly have wondered were it so, we should scarcely have blamed. But it was not so. That deep religiousness of mind which, amid whatever sins, was so marked in David, stood him in good stead in his hour of trial, and the prominent thought in the exile's mind is the thought of a strength and light which can never fail him, and the forward cry on his lips is, "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee."

Certainly, in their first utterance, these words are an example of a heroic faith. Brethren, it is a matter of encouragement and help to remember, in moments

of trial and dejection, that such examples have been. There is much to help and guide, to warn and stimulate, in such a phrase. Let us examine it.

I.

How well we all know the difference observable in the same scenes if placed under varying lights! The morning dawn has in it a power of pathos, of hope, at times of joy. The evening is full of tender sadness or soothing repose. The crimson flaming sunset whispers of storm. How the sentiment of each passes to the objects they illumine; and the same long stretches of woodland, or low lines of hills, or deep-cut valleys, or quiet country pastures, or rising moorlands, or wide-expanding sea, wear, under different lights, the varying sentiments of stillness or movement, of wrath, or fear, or sorrow, of the pathos of disappointed expectation, or the unspeakable delight of a realized joy!

Who can tell why Nature so affects the human soul? Yet so it is; and fair and strange as the world is, it is the light in which it meets our minds which makes it fair and strange. When the lights and shadows chase each other across the breezy moorland, we scarcely recognize it as the line of threatening peaks which gloom upon us amid the

shrouds of misty vapour that wrap it on the chilly winter day.

Now, according to the spiritual light gathered in the soul from Him Who is the Source of light, and thrown upon this scene of love and struggle, such will the life of each appear to every soul.

Brethren, it is the mark of a religious mind to look at all things under the light of the great thought of God.

And, indeed, in our own day we cannot fail—can we?—to remember with real gratitude how many high and noble things—even allowing abatement for much that is wrong and sad—command respect and carry with them power. No thoughtful man can be blind or indifferent to the progress of the Western world. No one can shut his eyes to the fact that men have gradually learned the blessing and uses of freedom, the respect that is due from each to all, the increased reverence for public-spirited self-forgetting, for manly courage, for sincerity, for justice and fairness between man and man.¹ Far, indeed, as our phase of civilization is from the religious level of the New Testament, still, confusedly yet certainly, voices of acknowledgment seem to rise from it of something higher than what is offered by sense and time; of a Power over all, guiding and teaching men even in the efforts which are apparently limited by the limits of the

¹ Cf. R. W. Church on Christianity and the Teutonic Races.

grave—voices which, reluctantly and unsubmitively and insufficiently, and yet in some real sense of fact and truth are ever saying, “O God, Thou art my God!”

And, brethren, in a ‘higher, deeper, truer sense, a religious eye, fixed on the sadness and effort of a progressive age, sees the guidance of Him Who rules always, knowing that there is “a purpose working to an end,” and seeing the sorrow and travail as well as the advance of the ages, murmurs always, “O God, Thou art my God!”

More certainly and clearly still, *here* we find the motto and explanation of the action of the Church.

Wherever the Church is really doing her duty, she is *felt* to be a kingdom different from, higher than, the world. Civilization, with all its powers and blessings, is a great and beneficent force working under the providence of God. Its end and aim, however, is strictly limited to man’s place and object in this sphere of our present being. Not so the Church. In all departments of her activity she has an air and manner which belong to Eternity. She *inflicts* on men the constant reminder that their truest life is beyond the grave. Sometimes men love this, sometimes they resent it; but there it is. What is it in essence she is always teaching?

Take the external expressions of her worship. Whether it be the higher and more solemn forms—the lights, the vestments, the incense commanded by the

Prayer-book for the Church of England, in common with the usages of other parts of the Catholic Church—or the simpler and less dignified expressions of Eucharistic service which long custom springing up in evil times, or insufficient means for providing anything more splendid, have in some places made practically inevitable;—all are meant to have a solemnity and unearthliness which will ever remind the worshippers of that precious truth, “O God, Thou art my God!”

And far more in all that makes up the heart and soul of her worship. The Psalms with which day by day is heard the voice of the Bride to the Bridegroom; the “prayers, intercessions, supplications, and eucharists,” offered by her all according to Apostolic command¹; the Penitential tones of Lent and Advent; the festal songs of Whitsuntide and Easter;—what is the cry of all? Is it not the assertion of God’s nearness and glory and beauty—“O God, Thou art my God?”

After all, society and the Church are but aggregates of human beings. Yes, brethren, when the morning is breaking over the mountains, shaft after shaft the gold and crimson flame up into the sky at dawn; then comes the blaze which wraps the woods in brilliance, and illumines the mountains, and flames along the reaches of the sea.

¹ Cf. 1 Tim. ii. 1.

So, also, the high affections, the clear thoughts, and the resolute determination from which come habits, tempers, manners—in society, in the Church—are outcomes of individual beings; and hence, going deeper, is one thought that rises before us in all its dignity, in all its strength and splendour—the human soul.

The human soul! Man, indeed, is an animal, but the most ordinary observation shows that man is a spirit too. There is something more in him than a mere animating life, a function of the body; there is an independent principle, the heart of his very self. Men who have insisted that the perceptions of the senses are the basis of truth, have denied the existence of the soul, and reduced all to materialism. But the sense of moral freedom, the sense, the deep and solemn sense, of responsibility,—these have for mankind at large given the lie to such sceptical dreams. Yes, brethren, each of us feels and knows full well that he is a living soul—a soul with all its vast opportunities, all its capacity for sorrow, all its functions fitted to enter on and realize eternal bliss, with a life to live and a death to die; but these things, and more of the soul's dignity and beauty, little are they known or felt as practical and efficient facts until *it*, too, is seen and thought of under the light of the great thought of God.

We are apt to value men on their culture and their place in the ranks of the progress of our time.

The wicked traditions of a civilization, which is at least, we sometimes fear, three parts heathenism, lead to wrong standards and false measures. We view men in their class aspects, or under their professional garbs. The glamour of rank, or the pride that comes with wealth, leads the so-called high-born and wealthy to that kind of silly blindness to the facts of life which eats away loftiness of character, and makes people thoughtless and inconsiderate about the needs of others. The depression of poverty fills with envy those who feel aggrieved at the better fortune of others less suffering than themselves. In either case, the "bearing of one another's burdens" is gone. Man has been looking at his fellow-man as a dependent, a superior, an object of envy, an object of fear—not, alas! as a *soul*. Find God, and you find yourself; yes, and you value your neighbour. To cry, "O God, Thou art my God!" in deep reality is to see in its true light the greatness of the human soul.

II.

And, again, these words are the experience of a clinging, *an ardent affection*.

Brethren, we Christians know, to a degree the Psalmist cannot have known, how truly it is such an affection which is the central soul of true religion.

The soul moved, awakened, alive to the facts of eternal life, sees and then loves that goodness, to learn which is the real reason for our being in the world at all; soon it feels that to think or talk of loving goodness is to deal too deeply in what is intangible and abstract. The heart needs an object. Before it appears, in all the majesty of His unspeakable beauty, the living God. It gazes upon Him in awe and wonder. Is He not too distant? Is He not too high? What is man, that *He* should be mindful of him? or the son of man, that *He* should visit him? No; the witness of the Spirit, even among the Psalmists and Prophets—like the breeze of morning carrying the perfumes of opening flowers—brought the aroma of the truth. Then Christ came. Not even Apostolic insight and Apostolic devotion were enough fully to express what *that* meant. That Life of unflagging, unlimited sacrifice was God's "appeal to His creatures" for stronger trust and deeper love. Here was generosity, unselfishness, kindness, a lavish expenditure of self from the first to the last of that wonderful Life. This, if anything, would show man how God loved him. We, brethren, we, even more than the saintly Psalmist, are appealed to to offer in return an unstinted affection; for our lips the cry is framed, "O God, Thou art my God!"

III.

“O God, Thou art my God!” This, too, is the expression of a *deliberate purpose*. We know well that our affections, as well as our thoughts and beliefs, are to a great extent under the control of our wills.

It is the province of the will to determine our actions; and such an expression as that of the text is the outcome of an energetic determination. How keen that determination was in Psalmists and Prophets, we know from the records of the ancient Jewish Church; how keen in the case of Apostles and early disciples, we know from the story of the Acts. What was then has been reproduced in later ages of the Church. In later ages, too, in the strange, secret annals of the kingdom of God, first one, then another, hidden and lowly, or high-born and famous, have borne out into the world, to the market-place, the street, the workman's cottage, or to the drawing-room and palace, the sweetness and strength, the humility and self-sacrifice, the meekness and courage, of the crucified Christ.

And then, in common times and among common men, once and again there are those who have given strength and time, thought and effort, the labour of the hand and the labour of the brain, to the one work—toil under the eye of an unseen Master, effort to

please an unseen Father, patience and labour to advance the kingdom of goodness, that is, the kingdom of God. "O God, Thou art my God!"—*that* has been the secret resolve which spurred them on.

IV.

Brethren, all this amounts to the solemn truth, that in such a phrase is expressed, in short, clear terms, drawn in definite lines, a type of character.

Character means the final and predominating impress on a soul. It includes and implies a number of attributes and habits gathered into a single life. Each living being has certain shades which make *its* variation from every other; but there are clear lines which, allowing for these shades, mark off a religious man.

Special characteristics or accidental features are difficult—sometimes, therefore, they may be wrong—for us to judge. Still, there are broad types which can, on the whole, be distinguished, and which certainly are to be found.

Surely, in the worldly character, it is more or less apparent that the *real* sphere of its aspiration and desire is *only* this present scene of sense and time. This is a character which is chiefly acted upon and formed from without. It is moulded by external

influences; it feels in an excessive degree the power of external forces. Its motives, those wonderful powers absorbed and used by mind and will, are born of persons and places and circumstances which are a part of outer life. If such outer life is changed or gone, its vigour varies or is dead. Such a character may be more or less mixed up with religious matters; but to it, it is a mere accident that the material which it uses is religious material. It is more or less religious at times; but its religion—such as it is—is easily thrown off its balance, and without difficulty disappears. It is filled with inconsistencies, and rich in omissions. Somewhere there is a want of depth, and such fixed principles as it has are dependent upon things around its outer life. It is like the mountains or the woodlands, which are now glowing in the sunlight, and again looking bleak or angry from the force of the storm.

Such a type of character is often placed before us in Holy Scripture in such persons as Balaam, or Saul, or Jehu; in such examples as Demas, or the young man who went away sorrowful from Christ, "having great possessions."

There is another type equally insisted upon in the Bible—the type of those not readily degraded by worldly influence, not frightened by the cry of the crowd; not willing to minimize responsibility, not quick and prompt in disloyalty to duty. These are

they who do not adopt any handy opinion in place of the declared Will of their Maker ; who have “eager and reverent thoughts of God ;” who mix in life, but use it with high principle and noble purpose ; whose inner eye is gazing earnestly through the surrounding mist to a better country ; who can be cheerful yet serious, earnest yet kindly, energetic yet with a mysterious calmness, vigorous yet possessing the soul in patience ; who can judge with mysterious accuracy, and yet make large and loving allowance ; who can be decided yet humble, gentle yet determined, loving yet aghast at evil, diligent yet thoughtful for others, tender yet strong. No wild impulse carries such away from their moorings ; no fierce clamour affrights. These are they who are “not *afraid* of any evil tidings,” though they feel, and deeply, the sharp piercings of sorrow. They “bear good fortune meekly ; they suffer ill with constancy ; and through evil and through good they uphold truth always.” Their motive power is drawn from an unseen, unmeasured depth of assistance. They are *in* the world, not *of* the world. This secret of their mysterious unity and consistency of being is this—a fixed principle, an unchanging purpose, a clinging affection. “O God, Thou art my God !”

V.

Such, brethren—such is the religious man. All Scripture teaches of him; but the fulness of his meaning and power has been shown to us in the light of Christ.

Ah! brethren, is it not true that, for the most part, we oscillate between the two? There are two magnets which attract our souls: there is the drawing of the world, and the beauty and tenderness of God.

It is of the last importance to the spiritual life that we make the great venture, the great decision. This is taught us distinctly by our Lord. The standard He holds before us, never to be lost sight of, is the perfection of the Father in His goodness and glory. This must be before our eyes. There will be, there must be, vacillations and failings and flaws; but of the standard we must not lose sight, and in the main things of purpose and affection—those things which leave a final stamp on character—there must be *decision*.

All will then go well. "More and more unto the perfect day" is the law of a Christian life—sincerely Christian.

Faith is the gift of God; the softened heart is the result of His grace; yet both faith and repentance,

for their full and fruitful action, depend upon ourselves. When in any soul that action is full and fruitful, *that* is what is called "a converted soul."

Perseverance is the crown of the spiritual life, just as humility and sincerity are its bases. Perseverance is God's own blessed gift, but given it is in answer to sincere and anxious prayer. A converted heart, living in grace, bound in Sacramental union with Him Who is Head and Lord of us all, ever asking for perseverance—the grace that uses all grace—is a heart whose habitual cry of effort and affection is, "O God, Thou art my God!"

VI.

Ah! then, at such a time as this, what can we better take as our guiding matter than the cry of the text?

Time—that mystery, that indefinable "phantom of succession"—is still our own. We look back on such a day in the Past, with all its venerable traditions, with all its solemn teachings of experience, and its saddening memories of sorrow or of sin. We fix our eyes on the Present, which is ours here and now, to use or to abuse—the great opportunity laid in the power of us all. We look forward to the Future, dim and cloud-covered, bearing in its arms mys-

terious possibilities as well as solemn certainties which affect us all. How shall we deal with gifts so terrible—so full, also, of hope as well as of fear?

Surely alone to Thee can we turn, O ineffable Name! Surely only in Thee can we find confidence for the Future as well as comfort for the Past! Yes, brethren, yes, let us—oh! let us, as Christ guides us—treat the gift of life under the light and leading of the great thought of God.

Sin, distinct, wilful, persistent, of course separates us from those higher visions and that holy companionship; but also the constant cherishing of lower and less worthy affections, the constant encouragement to baser motives and mere worldly views, lowers the tone of a Christian life, and at last induces us to follow the will-o'-the-wisps of fashion and folly instead of the steady and "kindly light." Let us make a clean sweep of it all, here and now. Here and now let us try again to look at life—in this opening reach of time—as Christ would have looked at it. Let us renew a resolve, and rekindle our affection, and cry with all our heart, with all our being, "O God, *Thou*"—not self, not money, not luxury, not idleness, not passion, not pleasure, not indolence, not sorrow, not murmuring, not care—"O God, *Thou*"—good and glorious and beautiful—"Thou art my God!"

There are two cities, says S. Augustine—the city

of the world, and the city of the saints. The one is formed of souls going deeper and deeper in love of self till they reach contempt of God; the other in love of God till they reach disregard of self.

Brethren, it is the love of God which harmonizes and purifies all human affections. Surely we will cry, "Be my soul with the saints, and shall I fight against them now?" Surely we will determine to help in the forming of that city, Whose Builder and Maker is God.

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee." How often—oh, how often—have we wandered from this Light of Life! A new reach of time opens upon us. Let us try, earnestly let us try, again.

SERMON VI.

The Need of the Heart.

“I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”—I COR. xii. 3.

WE have seen then, my brethren—have we not?—that there rests a special glory upon us as the children of God. The light of His countenance is shining upon us, as the sunlight plays on the golden hair of a sleeping child. We—once we are baptized into the Body of Christ—we have placed at our disposal powers of a world to come; we are in a state of justification—in a state in which we may, if we will, become what we ought to be; we have what the Apostle calls the glory of sons.

Further, and in consequence, hope must be a real, an energizing force in our souls; we must advance in the power of its unconquerable vigour; we may mount onward in hope of a higher glory.¹

If so, something more. Is the soul all energy, all

¹ Referring to sermons preached immediately before this, but not published.

vigour of aspiration and desire? Is this the end? No; only when its rest is deepest is its upward movement most unfaltering. We must *rest* in God—rest with love ever stimulating, and still bringing,—peace.

If so—you ask—what is the broad view of religion in character and motive power, of which such truths are partial visions? Tender and deep is spiritual meditation and interior attitude of soul; but, lest we make the mistake of subjective dreamers, is it not well to “check” such thoughts by a broad and vigorous view of the whole of which they are parts?

In other words, let us ask what is the general view of the Christian religion in the heart and life, which we learn as obedient learners in the school of Christ.

Stand on our green slopes when the sun is wester-ing, and watch the lingering caresses of its passing glory as it sleeps upon our woods. The leaves of the ash and the slender birch blow back before the pressure of the wandering wind. The soft, clear green and blue of the upper heavens is flecked with clouds of pink and opal, against which the sunlight on the sombre masses of the oak woods lies in broad rich folds of golden sheen. Every shadow is soft and soothing, lying close by the gold of the dying day; each leaf, each cloud, each streak of gold, has its own moving and penetrating beauty.

Stand on the crest of the distant line of hills as

the day is sinking. The light is as tender, the shadow as serene; but it is not the leaf and the sunshaft which strike the mind or eye of the gazer, but the broad effects of cloud and sunlight, of expanding landscape, of winding river, of deep and solemn wood.

Spiritual acts, spiritual conditions, these are like the narrower landscape or the miniature scene; but what is this broad view of religion in its subjective aspect implied by them?

This, my friends, is suggested by the text.

I.

By the text? In the range of Scripture is there text so strange? Have any of us ever heard these words read without a secret wonder what the Apostle, when he wrote them, could have been about?

“No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” Of course not. What can the Apostle be thinking of to make so very unnecessary a statement? And then, what then? “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” And why not? Is there anything so very difficult, anything so very sublime, in stating so elementary a doctrinal fact as to need for such statement special assistance and Divine illumination? What can—we ask—what *can* the Apostle mean?

My brethren, S. Paul never writes at random ; he never tries to startle his readers with useless puzzles, or tire them with mere truisms. Certainly he has a meaning. Let us see.

S. Paul is at Ephesus. It is the year 57 of our era. His hands are full. Work—the work of the kingdom of God—is accumulating upon him from every quarter. Nowhere more than in Ephesus itself. Utterly desolate now is the great Ephesian plain. The persevering efforts of modern explorers have laid bare some substructures which remain of what was once the great theatre at the south-western corner of Coressus, and the buildings, now overgrown with tangled shrub, which mark what was once the stadium. Broken columns, half-shapeless masses of masonry, earth-covered portions of pavement, still witness to the spot where once was the Temple of Artemis—one of the wonders of the world. Very different from the silent plain and scattered and buried ruins of now was the scene then—the splendid city lying there in the arms of Mount Coressus and Mount Prion—the mart of Asiatic commerce, the witness of the wealth and luxury and genius of the Greek races of Asia, the capital of one arm at least of Greek religion, the meeting-point of the energy of Europe with the luxurious sensualism of the Asiatic races ; the city of palaces, spread out under the shadow of the stately mountains of Asia, and clustered in the sun-swept plain, through

which Cayster, with many wanderings, sought its home in the sun-swept sea.

In this splendid, sinful city the great Apostle had been at work for three years. Here he had "ministered the Spirit" in Holy Baptism and Confirmation to those who had been before only baptized "unto the baptism of John;" here for three months he had laboured with his headstrong fellow-countrymen to convince them that their long-sought Messiah was to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ; here, in Tyrannus' lecture-room, he preached perseveringly for two years to men of any race—Greek or Jewish—who would listen to the Gospel; here the Apostle's pastoral ministrations kept pace with his public preaching; and here, for the ever-growing family of converts, he ordained Priests, and began to organize the Church system both in the city and in the neighbouring districts of Asia Minor.

It was a time of supernatural effort, for never were miracles more numerous, wrought by S. Paul, than now; it was a time of splendid successes, but a time of successes won—and what true spiritual victory is not?—by incessant and perilous struggle and unremitting toil.

And yet, in this time of work and sorrow, S. Paul's heart was not only in Asia, but sailed in its deep and manly sympathy to his spiritual children far away.

Across the Ægean his eyes were straining, and his

ears were open for voices of trouble or perplexity which reached him from the Churches of Achaia. Corinth had been very dear to the Apostle—it had been a wilful but a darling child; and now from Corinth distressing tidings reached him through members of “the household of Chloe.”

Many were the questions which were agitating that restless and tempted Church. S. Paul found it necessary to adjudicate on the question of marriage, on the question of idol sacrifices, on the question even of the dress of the women, but above all the really burning question of the moment was that relating to spiritual gifts.

The gifts of the Spirit of God, dear friends, are very real blessings indeed. We in the Christian Church of the present day are as much in possession of the highest and best of them as were the converts of S. Paul in Corinth. We have had the gift of regeneration in Holy Baptism; we have had with it the germ of the three theological virtues—Faith and Hope and Charity—whereby the soul is united to God; we have had in Confirmation those seven gifts or dispositions of soul by which the *acts* of the three Divine virtues are called forth into activity; but it pleased God *then* to grant certain spiritual gifts besides them, of much less general importance indeed, but in their effects much more striking.

It was not in frail human nature to be unaffected

by strange powers which were placed in evidence like these miraculous gifts, and it seems to have been not in diabolic nature to allow such gifts to pass unchallenged. Probably these strange and Divine manifestations were met by a counterblast from Hell.

There were, of course, Christians who fell especially under temptation to rejoice in spiritual gifts because of the attention they attracted without proportionately submitting their souls to the real guidance of the Spirit of God. In such, party spirit would be rife. They would boldly take the side of Christ, not in a Christian temper, but as unflinching partisans. To these would be opposed the enemies of truth, who could vie with them in manifestations of extraordinary power, proceeding not from above, but from below. Hence in the two parties arose—as always—watch-words to be used by each for triumph and provocation. The public encounters of such persons would be some forecast of the scenes in Alexandria during the Arian controversy. One, so to speak, would shake his fist in the face of the other, shouting in provocation, "Let Jesus be anathema!" and the other would answer back in fierce defiance, "Jesus is the Lord!"

Both war-cries took a colour of religion from the possession by those who employed them of these extraordinary and superhuman gifts. Neither were really religious, either in the temper that prompted them, or in their consequences to the Church. Both, although

in different degrees, indeed, were bad, for both had their exciting cause in party spirit.

Party spirit is one of those miserable results of the fall of human nature which shows itself most constantly among civilized nations. It arises from a perversion of human sympathy and earnest conviction. When men of strong characters and clear minds take firm hold of some special view or line of belief in matters of general interest, they are sure, from one reason or another, to carry many others along with them. Those who follow often lose direct interest in the original truth which prompted the movement, but they do not lose interest in the general success of a cause espoused by themselves. Human selfishness, human self-interest, human vanity, human shame, all unite to prompt them to wish and work, not for truth, but for their own success, cost what it may. Hence comes the perverted and perverting temper of party spirit. It becomes a stimulant, and at last it intoxicates. It is fed by prejudice; it stirs and enflames the most desolating and combustible passions; it blinds the eye to the real state of things; it is like coloured glasses—it gives facts of the outer world an unnatural tone; it perverts the judgment, and induces men, otherwise far from bad men, to misquote motives, to misstate occurrences, to appeal to low and degrading principles, and deliberately depart from the generosity of truth. Under the influence of party spirit, facts

and principles become merely pegs on which to hang personal rivalry and hatreds. We know, alas! what party spirit means—even when softened by English common sense—in the ordinary spectacle of political superstition and debasement so constantly before us in modern times. Religion, however, quite as much as or more than politics, has furnished occasion for the outburst of this storm of evil; and it was religion in Corinth which furnished the occasion now. Doubtless, however, each party were, as usual, trying to throw dust in their own eyes. Each were bent—as men often are—on deceiving themselves so far as to colour base motives with the hues of virtue. Each were, of course, by way of being eager for the triumph of religious truth, and so the bewildered crowd around would be left—as to the rights and wrongs of the question—in a condition of unfathomed perplexity.

S. Paul was determined to make all clear. S. Paul, of all men, knew when to speak and when to maintain silence. And now he spoke. He makes a clean sweep of the whole thing. He noway minces his words; he noway plays into the hands of any self-deceiver. This party spirit is not the work of the Spirit of truth. Little it matters what the utterance is, whether in its bare words heretical or orthodox; it is *bad* from its source and end. “I give you to understand,” exclaims the great Apostle, “that truth, and truth only in word and motive, can proceed from God’s

Blessed Spirit; and *you* are far enough from being children of truth. I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus anathema: and that no man in reality can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

II.

The second statement of S. Paul concerns us specially now. And yet, indeed, the anathema of the Corinthian fanatics against our Most Holy Redeemer we cannot say is, in modern times, wholly unknown.

There is the coarse unbelief which induces men loudly and roughly to denounce the Christian Religion as a worn-out and useless thing. Then there is the so-called "thoughtful" unbelief, by which highly intellectual persons, devoid apparently of any sense of sin, and living in an intellectual dreamland, try every now and again to evade the force of Christian evidences, or even to construct systems built of philosophical moonshine to take the place of the Christian Faith. And, then, there is the more dangerous because more refined unbelief; the unbelief which finds its prophets in the authors of those various blasphemous romances which have sprung from France and Germany, and of which the hero is a travesty of our Lord.

At the root of all there is the secret dislike in the

corrupt human heart of an ideal of exalted purity—a message of mercy, which certainly humiliates although it also heals; dislike of a religion which *will* judge man irrespective of the accidental trifles which mark different social grades; dislike of a system which, if applied to conduct at all, entails some trouble, and will not dispense with sincere effort. Human pride, human ignorance, human sin,—these must be assaulted if we are Christians; and these human nature does not love to assault.

Now, in the long-run, one of two courses is usually chosen—either the blessedness and courage of an entire surrender to Him Who is by right our Master, or an effort to forget or ignore Him, which, if unsuccessful, only leads to irritation, and which, if persisted in unsuccessfully, is likely to result in positive opposition and scorn. “Jesus is the Lord!” must be the cry, the fervid and eager cry, of loving hearts, or men are likely to end in a tone of mind not far removed from that which finds vent in the utterance of Corinthian blasphemy, “Let Jesus be anathema!”

Ah! dear friends, it is shocking to us, deeply shocking, that such a word should be so closely, even for a moment, connected with the sacred Name.

We do not like—do we?—to speak too strongly about love to Jesus. We fear to be unreal; we dread lest our words should outrun our feelings—nay, lest our occasional feelings should go beyond the strength of

our habitual thought. That is well. Still, however, it would, I hope, be very painful to us that any word of irreverence, not to say of insolent blasphemy, should approach the sacred Name.

It is the Name of our closest and truest Friend ; it is "the Name which is above every name ;" it is the one "Name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved ;" it is the Name, dear and blessed, which brings sweet consolations in life's toil and struggle ; it is the Name on which, in the fulness of its redeeming power and tenderness, we, poor sinners, rest when we come to die. No ; we feel sure that anything which prompts us or others to aught else but love and reverence towards that sacred Name, has its source, not from above, but from below—is certainly not from the Holy Ghost.

III.

But it is S. Paul's other statement which concerns us here and now ; if we want to catch a glimpse of the broad view of religion of which we have spoken, our business is with "those who call Jesus the Lord."

S. Paul evidently attaches to these words a deep and serious meaning, when he says that "no man can call Jesus the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

What, then—what is meant by "calling Jesus the Lord" ?

(1) And first, we are not rightly calling Jesus the Lord when we allow our religion to be in any measure one of cant and phrase.

A coarse and ruinous hypocrisy is, perhaps, hardly a common phase of false religion among the English people. As a rule, thank God, we are inclined to dislike what is pretending, showy, or untrue. Hypocrisy, however, is a slowly creeping vice, and only by degrees can master any mind. It did not seem a probable form of sin among the first followers of Christ, and yet there was a Judas. The Chaplains and Confessors of kings in European courts of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries were often men of serious convictions and earnest nature, and yet too often history shows them to us as sliding into courtly phrases with their royal penitents, when they ought to have spoken the language of loving but severe rebuke. Much of the Protestant revolt against authority and against the Faith in England, in the days of the Stuarts, had doubtless a beginning in real love of liberty, and hatred of corruptions which had crept over the Church under cover of the Christian name; but at last there were many Puritans who allowed themselves freely in Evil, and satisfied the remonstrances of conscience by the habit of quoting texts of Scripture, and speaking through their noses. It is painful, alas, in our own day to come across those in whom the repetition of fixed formulæ and stupid

Shibboleths has taken the place of sincere acceptance of the Faith in heart and conduct.

Ah! let us beware. Indeed, indeed, above all things, we must strive to be *true*. To mock the moral sense within us by the habit of repeating religious phrases which far outrun our efforts, not to say our habitual acts, is a desperate danger. Woe, indeed, is it for those who have drifted into so deep a self-deception that they no longer realize that they are at all deceived. No assertion that we are "saved" will take the place of habitual and loving penitence; no habit of exalting the efficacy of "believing" will make up for unfaithfulness in watching and prayer. Pride, self-righteousness, self-deceit, gliding on towards the dark boundary-line of hypocrisy and cant,—these may sometimes take the place and wear the air of a deep and real Christian character. They will not do. Truth alone will stand the penetrating light of the Judgment; to have a religion of unreal and unrealized phrases is *not* to "call Jesus the Lord, in the power of the Holy Ghost."

(2) And again, a religion which is only a homage to habit, and a submission to prevailing fashion, is not "calling Jesus the Lord."

Religious habits are, indeed, far from being without their value. It is valuable, it is wise, that early in life your children should be trained in habits of strict attention to religious duty. To be in the habit of

attending church, of receiving the Sacrament, of saying your prayers with regularity and reverence, is most important. But life goes on; times of darkness, of spiritual darkness, come; the circumstances in which you are placed, exacting and imperious, the voices of the world, earthly and vehement,—these influence and overpower you. If habit has its good effect in steadying, it has its bad in deadening. Prayer is said, but there is less earnestness; Sacraments are received, but there is waning devotion and want of preparation and thanksgiving; church is attended, but the recitation of the Psalms and the hearing of the Lessons have become inattentive and perfunctory; conscience is more and more languidly examined, and at last, left almost to take care of itself. Years are advancing, and you are not growing better, but you console yourself on a decent and habitual religious observance. Well, it is better that this much of religious practice should still be preserved. It may be revived; it may form a framework for better things. But oh! awake, arise; turn back on the path you are treading with such callous indifference. These habits in themselves alone are not religion. This is not “calling Jesus the Lord.”

Alas! the spectacle is not an uncommon one of those who deny themselves in nothing from the promptings of religion, and yet consider themselves still Christians; of those whose prayers are little

better than a form; whose consciences are examined in the scantiest manner; who take the Sacrament when they can receive it late in the forenoon and without inconvenience, but who never think of denying themselves by rising early to receive their Communions, much less by following the Church's practice of keeping their fasts; who will keep their temper so long as there is no temptation to lose it, and help others when there is no trouble in doing so; whose life, in fact, is becoming one of merely selfish habit; whose religious devotion is limited to a Sunday evening service. This, this, surely, is very far from that inward devotion of heart and understanding which is implied in the phrase to "call Jesus the Lord."

For, indeed, it is certain that such religion as this will break down in the day of trouble and of storm.

To be one of a community or one of a family where religious habits prevail, is, indeed, a great assistance to our own religion. It is always easier to swim with the stream than to breast its billows and strike out against its resisting rush. If the stream of religious habit be enthusiastic and energetic, it is even possible to persuade ourselves that our religion also is full of enthusiasm and energy. Ah me! nothing outside the soul will, in the long-run, do. Only that which is made part of ourselves can be relied on when things around us change and fail. Remember—oh!

remember that no regularity of external habit, that no warmth of enthusiasm in word or practice, will take the place of religious conviction and religious obedience. To speak of grace as being indefectible is heretical—it is false. We must watch and pray. We must remember that the day is coming, coming quickly, when, alone before God, we shall stand *just as we are*; and the glow of other men's enthusiasm which shone upon us, or the maintenance of habits of our own individual life having then departed, our Religion, alas! will then be seen to have meant something very different from "calling Jesus the Lord."

(3) No more can a religion of a merely emotional character exhaust the sense of that serene and lofty phrase.

In religion, my brethren, there is, there ever must be, an emotional element. Noble emotion, lofty and purified feeling, is ever the homage paid by human nature to the beauty of Goodness, and the attraction, and even entrancing loveliness, of Truth. Nature, in her tender and majestic moods of softness or of storm; human nature, in its external fairness of form or expression, more still in its interior attractiveness of purity or of self-forgetting;—these have a power unrivalled in force and persistence of awakening and stimulating the nobler and loftier feelings of the human heart. The waving wild roses in the green lanes in summer; the bending bluebells which carpet

the birch woods, and bow amidst the rising bracken under the breeze of spring; the soft azure distances suggesting on the limits of the landscape a limitless Beyond; the mystic lights in the sanctuary, always speaking of a Presence, always tossing about the fretted roofs and round the sculptured angels the mysterious rhythmic motion of their lights and shadows;—these, these, each in its own order, rouse the feelings of a sensitive being, and play upon that finest, noblest, saddest instrument—human nature—with changeful modulation and in many modes.

More still when Human Nature itself is artist as well as instrument. Sweet to the soul at eventide is the voice of the sweet singer; sweet to a generous heart and an earnest mind the burning word that stings to activity in the path of truth and duty; sweeter still quiet words of encouragement, or the supporting glance of affection from a fair face speaking the thought of a soul beautiful and loved and strong. Human nature—human nature, so sad, so wrecked, so erring, yet so beautiful, with the likeness of a Divine life, and the air of a better country still upon it, despite the Fall,—this, above all, will waken the human soul, and send the heart throbbing in waves of noble, therefore of bravely controlled, emotion.

What else is the meaning of the high office of poetry, of painting, of music? By what else do you thrill in romantic literature under the touch of a master's hand?

How otherwise, but through this response of feeling, come many of those reawakings of nobler thoughts and intentions which often fill us with shame at short-coming, and through sorrow and pity do us, undoubtedly do us, good?

Naturally, then, when the better vision of a heavenly country, when the fairer vision of Him Who is "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely," are presented to the human mind, these will kindle our enthusiasm and fire our feelings.

Brethren, this is not wrong—on the contrary, it is right and real, and it may be blessed. Only let us remember such feelings, indeed, are religious, but they are not Religion; if with them we allow ourselves to be content, we shall make a great mistake. They become dangerous if they are not—to borrow a phrase from chemistry—*precipitated* into conduct, if they do not leave behind them a deposit of more firmly fixed conviction, a residuum of unassailable principle, and a calmer depth of conscientious resolve. Ah! remember, I beseech you, remember, the warmest, purest feelings about our Master, if they are fruitless and passing—these in no real sense can come under the description of "calling Jesus the Lord."

IV.

Brethren, to "call Jesus the Lord" is, speaking briefly, to accept in heart and life the truth of the Divine nature of our Master, with all its consequences.

Take examples for a moment ere we close.

(1) And first and necessarily it is to accept "the Faith." There are two attitudes of mind possible face to face with the mysterious truths of revelation. Standing in the one, the soul criticizes and selects such portions of truth as are congenial to its tastes and habits. It is like the action of a man of trained and critical judgment examining and selecting in a warehouse where beautiful products of industry are accumulated, and from them, after his fancies, furnishing his house. The other is that of a soul who, seeing clearly the strength of evidential ground on which rests revelation, accepts with humble, that is real, *faith* all that God has committed to His Church's keeping, not because it commends itself to taste or fancy, but because it has been so committed to a Divine Society on authority unquestionably Divine. *It* is like the action of an eager and conscientious child, who sits in the class of an able teacher, and learns from one who knows what it cannot know.

We must, indeed, each of us, in the long-run—we

must be either a critic or a disciple. We know which character has the Master's approval. "Except ye be converted, and *become as little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

To accept "the Faith" in mind, to allow the reasonable conclusion from it to kindle the affections, to allow both to give impetus to the will,—this is necessary in a Christian. Do you "*believe* in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"? If so, you are in the path of a reverent, a resigned, a responsible, life—a life of energy, of submission, of trust. Such a faith checks one's anxiety, and consoles by dependence, and gives rest by filial reliance. Do you "*believe* in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord"? Do you *believe* in all that astonishing revelation of unbeginning life and love, placed at a point of time under conditions of a human existence, and descending to the heroic effort of voluntary death? If so, love and hope are kindled, and the soul catches a vision of a state of better moral and spiritual power than we have ever known, one day and at last, to be ours. Do you "*believe* in the Holy Ghost"? If so, there is a quicker ear for listening to Divine inspiration, and a heart more responsive to appeals tender and strong. Do you "*believe* in the Holy Catholic Church"? If so, what a bond of brotherhood here on earth! if so, what a new view of what we long for—"salvation"! Not a deliverance from allotted punishment by some mental athletics in

this world ; not some "acceptance" of Christ's merits to be a password into Heaven ; but an energetic and yet peaceful enjoyment of communion with Him Who is the Source of life, which leads to increasing conquest of evil now, and entire deliverance from it in another life. Do you "*believe* in the communion of saints" ? If so, the horizon enlarges ; you recognize *your* place in a world of spirits at one with the Spirit from Whom we come, and each helping others by every holy act of love and prayer. Do you "*believe* in the forgiveness of sins" ? If so, why carry a burden, when by your own soul's act of contrition and confession you may be rid of it, and enjoy the absolving mercy of Him Who is the one Mediator between the Nature Human and Divine ? Do you "*believe* in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting" ? If so, you will reverence this mysterious dwelling of your soul, this consecrated clay, and strive to live in the conditions of Time with a spirit proportioned to an Eternal destiny—strive to convert your lower impulses by the constant instinct that you are "born to be a king." I do not mean that complete achievement follows at once. Far from it. But there will be—amidst whatever failings—the upward look, the earnest effort ; there will be the recurring confidence in One Who has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows ; there will be prayer for perseverance, and, at last, there will be victory.

Ah! to do this is indeed to accept the realities of the "Light of Life," to do this is to "call Jesus the Lord." And can you and I, frail creatures, deny for an instant that to do this it must be done, it can be done, it can *only* be done, "by the Holy Ghost"?

(2) Again, take another example. To "call Jesus the Lord" must mean to take as *our* standard of greatness, our ideal of the use of life; that which He showed to be His.

Study that strange, that matchless Life, and what do we find? Nothing that men *naturally* soar towards satisfied His ambition. Neither wealth, nor power, nor intellectual victory, nor merely personal moral success, nor the joy of a reputation acquired in the minds of men by any energy of soul, in love of gifts which place one man a head and shoulders above his fellows, held Him in thrall for a moment; but only the intense love of an unselfish and self-forgetting heart expressing itself in a world of sorrow by serving others,—this, this satisfied His standard of struggle. "So it shall not be with you;" "I am amongst you as he that serveth." Following this, this only, we fully "call Jesus the Lord." Need I say to do it, we must do it "by the Holy Ghost"?

(3) Take one other test. So to do we must at least be struggling to grow in the Spirit, the sweet and attractive Spirit, that breathed in the life of Christ.

There is a story told—I know not with what truth

—of Talleyrand, the great French statesman. Talleyrand was, alas! an apostate, and an apostate Bishop. But though Talleyrand had abandoned his allegiance to the Christian revelation, he was wide awake to its power.

It is said that on one occasion a reforming enthusiast consulted Talleyrand on a scheme for meeting the needs of the human soul. Something of this sort he would appear to have said: "Christianity is a failure. Men are fast deserting its ranks and denying its truth. Man needs religion. The true reformer must replace this inefficient religion by one which will do the work better. I desire, in the interests of humanity, to found a new religion which will meet the needs of man." "Indeed!" answered the keensighted Talleyrand, in this sense, at least, if not exactly in these words. "You desire to found a religion for men which will supply the place of Christianity. Well, the first thing you must do is this: you must go and get crucified, and rise again the third day!"

Quite right. Without *that* spirit neither you nor I, dear friend, can find or found a religion for ourselves or others. The one spiritual power of inexhaustible fruitfulness is the spirit of sacrifice.

To have first in small measure and then in larger, the duty and blessing of a self-sacrificing life—this is to "call Jesus the Lord;" and who that knows anything of his own ingrained sluggishness and selfishness

will doubt that, if this is to be done, it must be done "by the Holy Ghost"?

Ah! these are high thoughts, and yet "the Light of Life" carries them into the crannies and crevices of daily duty.

We find, the more we think and strive and pray, that they are applicable to all conditions, and that the religion which supplies them is the only religion, practical and consoling, for us all. Heroic and splendid instances of their power may be seen in Paul the aged, in Pancratius the child, in Francis the enthusiastic reformer, in John the contemplative and patient saint.

But none the less, none the less, can they be seen in the overtaxed mother of the large family, in the common labourer struggling at his daily toil, in the poor governess toiling with her pupils in the school-room, in the conscientious clergyman fulfilling the round of his daily duties, in the servant in the large house carrying on faithfully and with thoroughness the work of a serving life, in the student spending the allotted time laboriously at his books in defiance of the seductions of passing pleasures, in the young man busy with daily work, never forgetting his confessions, his communions, his prayers,—when these, one and all, are acting under the sense of the Eye of our unseen Master, and with a heart of loving desire to follow the example of our Saviour Christ.

We must, we will, then—shall we not?—try to carry

our religion into the details of our own probation ; we must, we will, seek and use the strength and guidance of the Blessed Spirit, given to all who ask for Him—Who helps our infirmities, and so—oh, blessed achievement!—by *that* power reinforcing our miserable failures, we, such as we, with all our wretched sins and ignorance, may in this life, by His mercy, “call Jesus the Lord.”

SERMON VII.

The Sound Heart.

“ O let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.”—
Ps. cxix. 80.

THE hundred and nineteenth Psalm is interesting in more ways than one. It has a peculiar look distinguishing it from all others in the Psalter. It is divided, as we know, into two and twenty acrostic stanzas following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is said to have been done in order to facilitate the process of committing it to memory; and this is not improbable, for it seems to have served in the later days of Israel as a kind of manual of devotion.

It is one of the most noble expressions of spiritual affection to be found anywhere in the Psalter. Out of every line of it almost there breathes a heavenly joy—joy in the Law of God, joy in knowing, adoring, and doing according to His Will.

It was probably an outcome of that moral and spiritual revival which was coincident in point of time with the building of the second Temple, and,

from whatever soul it came, it struck a chord which vibrated responsively in the hearts of the captive people, once more enjoying the delight of their national religion.

Each stage in the Psalm touches upon some characteristic glory of God's Law, and expresses some corresponding mood of the religious mind and heart; and in *this* stanza, as in others, we have a fresh and vivid sense of a soul rising into ideal aspiration.

There are moments—bright and blessed moments—when more than at other times the human soul catches sight of the ideal. The beauty of goodness, the power and attraction of humility, the sweetness of God's love, the strength and peace of sincere religion, the joy of obedient faith, the beauty, and tenderness, and strength, and redemptive grace, of Christ,—these flash upon the Christian soul in overwhelming power at times. Alas! aspiration is one thing and achievement another; but still aspiration is somewhat, and no soul can ever approximately attain that does not, at times at least, ardently aspire.

How great is the aspiration of the text, "O let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed"!

I.

This longing—need I say it?—is one for us all.

It is one of those things which our Lord has brought into even clearer light than it had in the Psalmist's days. Nothing, nothing for any one of us who desires to follow Christ, nothing can be a more needful prayer than the prayer for the heart sound in God's statutes.

What are those "statutes"?

(1) Well, first, there must be meant a desire for a clear and healthy conscience. Whatever be our theory of conscience, at least it rules us with an imperial sway. Conscience may become morbid, or twisted, or duped, if indeed we play tricks with it. To act simply by it from the first is a lofty desire; to pull ourselves up with severity and sharpness when we find ourselves counter to its solemn claims—this is important in any real moral progress. Ah! indeed, to have a strong, clear conscience is certainly a very important proof of soundness of heart in God's statutes.

Young men, remember this. This is why self-examination, simple and honest, not morbid and microscopic—this is why a manly and Christian use of confession, and a tender and faithful cherishing of the grace of absolution, is so good and wise a

practice for those who, as sons of the English Church, desire to be guided by her sober and serious teachings. It is good for us to be disciplined in our inner life; good to have the courage, in the Church's definite and sensible way, to see to it that our consciences are cleansed from evil by the power of the Blood of Christ. So by a healthy conscience may our hearts be sound in His statutes, then shall we not be ashamed.

(2) And by these statutes there is meant the full range and reach of the moral Law. Nothing is so needful, for true strength and beauty of character, as a strongly implanted sense of reverence for the real distinction between right and wrong.

To know that we must put God first; that all the objects of our desires and efforts must be sought for in submission to Him; that our speech is His gift, and must be chastened; that we must remember the value of, and must learn to weigh our words; that our time is His, and must be used with a solemn sense of its shortness, and a reverent determination to consecrate it to His service; that we must honour, with noble, loving reverence, all who bear the shadows of His authority; that we must respect our neighbour's life, his property, his honour, and ourselves respect the awful mystery of the life we hold, and may, under sacred sanctions only, pass on to another; to have deep in us, in fact, the fixed principle that no self-

interest, no demands of passion, no seductions of the world, no wicked assertion of things being right because they happen to be popular or to please us—that none of them should turn us from a sober view of the eternal distinction between right and wrong, and the solemn claims of duty; to have deeply, seriously fixed in our minds and wills the awful demands of the moral Law;—this also, brethren, is to have a heart sound in His statutes, which may save us from being ashamed.

(3) And must we not say that for us these “statutes” are to be found in the providential guidance of life? “The young man,” so says the Psalmist, is to “cleanse his way” by “ruling himself by God’s Word.” That Word is to be found pre-eminently, indeed, in the teachings and revelations of Holy Scripture; but for the young, too, it is to be found in the advice, the warnings, the teachings of parents who have loved them—of the older and more experienced who have travelled before them the journey, the perplexing journey, of life. The experiences of life, indeed, to the eye more and more opened to see, to the heart more and more ready to understand, bring home, severely often, but certainly, indications of the Will of God. Ah! how rich and blessed are such teachings when, with a simple purpose and a “sound” heart, we are prepared to receive them!

(4) And surely, and above all, by the “statutes”

must be meant for us the Revelation of the Lord Jesus, the blessed Gospel, the Catholic Faith.

My brethren, how much conspires to shake our hold on this blessed possession! To some the story is too good news to be true; to others the fresh discoveries of the inexorable laws which seem to rule the solid universe narrow down the understanding to only things which the scientific spirit can grasp; to others the press of business, the constant, the necessary presence of "the things that are seen," conspire to close the eyes in increasing measure to supernatural and eternal fact. The grip on this world is so tight that the hold on another is relaxed.

And yet, with all our fresh discoveries, yet, with all our developed material civilization, men are full of sorrows; men are oppressed with sin; men suffer and die. Still, man cannot but feel himself made for better things than this poor passing life, with all its blessings, all its joys. What, above all, is a ground and reason for faith, strong and increasing, in Him Who came to bless us here and prepare us for a Future? Surely it is soundness of heart; the simple purpose and sincere desire, in spite of weakness of the will, and temptation of the "shortened" understanding, to grasp, and love, and know, and practise the revelation which He has given us of God.

Brethren, be sure it is bias which is often a danger to our faith quite as much as supposed difficulty.

God's way and Will in Christ, at least, account for real facts of life, and meet them—sin, sorrow, death, conscience, remorse, apprehension, or sense of an awful Future—in a way in which rival systems have never met them; for rival systems can only in these things, or certainly in some of them, cut the knot by denial or neglect.

Nothing but the revelation of Jesus Christ, for certain, deals really and effectively with sin; and if a man "says he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him." Oh for the absence of this self-deceiving! Oh to deal straight and true with our own sins! "O let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."

II.

The strong and honest purpose of a controlling religious character goes far to deal rightly with these "statutes." An increased aspiring of the soul to God, a deepening and felt relation with God, a self-revelation of the soul, a clear ear for the voice of God's Spirit, come from that sound purpose and healthy moral condition which prepare for a real contact with spiritual facts.

Here, for the sound heart, our religion gets backbone. It cannot be of that nerveless, sentimental character

which may do for emotional ecstasy, but cannot stand the attacks of temptation or the strains of sorrow. Hence, too, is a protection against many dangers; for to such "the common sense" of the spiritual life—yes, and of the loving practical system of the Church of Christ—comes home. These feel the need of God, the need of righteousness, the necessity of a Decision, of a final Judgment, and so have the good sense to see through what is deceiving in the present, and to look to the force of unseen facts. Hence come sincere penitence, and often a true grasp of the Church's wise and practical and highest teaching on confession; for self-discipline in the Christian life is not the part of the weak, but of the strong. The unsound heart may be "ashamed" to acknowledge sin; the sound heart will be ashamed to sin, but with no false shame as to penitence, as to confession of sin when it has been committed. It is this which helps to that strong and solid character, in fact, which guards conscience, and watches over life, and deals seriously and practically with the facts of need, of sin, of joy, of sorrow, which belong to our spiritual being, and are as real and more lasting than the facts of this material world.

"O let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."

III.

Well, then, it is indeed to be expected, and it is a fact, that by none so emphatically as by our Blessed Lord and His Apostles is stress laid upon the need of this "soundness of heart." Absolute sincerity, perfect simplicity, quiet, unostentatious earnestness,—these were what He showed in Himself and insisted upon in others. He never Himself, indeed, for an instant "strained after an effect or *posed* in an attitude"—that is clear enough even to men who are so unhappy as to be in the dark about His Divine Nature; but also He could not permit it in others, and His words were full of warning against it. Men according to his teachings were to remember the need and greatness of light, and the duty of acting with a simple heart so that light might be a blessing to them. He warned them to watch against hollowness and shams, which destroy spiritual power and beauty; He warned them to see to it that "the light in them was not darkness;" He spoke to them in encouragement of the "honest and good heart" which alone could use to fruitful purpose the Word of life.

His Apostles followed Him, keeping steadily before men's minds that one of the gravest dangers to which human nature can be exposed is the absence of simple, honest dealing with the things of God; the absence of

the simple, determined turning to the light and acting accordingly—the really “loving darkness rather than light,” because there was an absence of the “sound heart” which abandons, or at least eschews, in will and intention, “evil deeds.”

IV.

Well, then, brethren, we certainly learn this from our Master—that soundness of heart implies, at least, three things.

(1) The really sound heart *will look for the light*. Many of Christ's teachings are difficult. Some *seem* to belong to a state of things which prevailed in His time and has since passed away; some are hard to apply to our own condition—hard to reconcile with what we know to be the providential orderings of our own state of society. Some of these sayings, again, are difficult of interpretation, and even of reconciliation, with others; some appear so deep as to be, we think, practically unfathomable. There is—is there not?—a tendency—so it has been wisely said—in fallen human nature to fasten on to the *difficulty* of a subject, as if *that* were its characteristic feature—so to speak, the body and substance of it. What great subject, especially such a subject as religion, touching the interests and destiny of man, has ever been, can

ever be, free from difficulty? Difficulties cannot all at once be cleared away. Patience is one of the first requisites in mastering any important matter, and humility and diligence must follow fast on the heels of patience. These are characteristics of "soundness of heart"—that state of character towards God and the things of God which leads men, not blinking difficulties, to look to find through the difficulties a path, not in them a barrier. Are we looking for light? or are we ready to acquiesce in apparent darkness? Everything turns upon this. Is it the "soundness of heart" which prompts us to wait and watch, to set our faces earnestly in the direction of truth? or is it the unsoundness which prompts to levity, carelessness, "an evil heart of unbelief"—a readiness to find excuses for unbelief, and not a desire to find the grounds of faith? Is it a presumptuous determination, at all costs, to walk by sight, not by faith? That, indeed, is a serious, the most serious, of questions for us all.

There are, indeed, honest hearts who are, and have been, in the painful throes of doubt; honest hearts who have truly clung to God, and yet have *not* seen their way. Theirs is a tremendous trial. But for such we may be sure "the light will spring up"—spring up in due time to warm and gladden them, either here or hereafter.

But there are, alas! others who never set their

faces to the dawn. They exaggerate difficulties; they welcome any travesty of the Faith. Either the temptations of the Present so overcome them that they do not *want* the revelations of the Future, and so are ready to disbelieve them; or mere intellectualism so intoxicates them that they will not allow the play of their immortal spirits crying for the truth; or "they deceive themselves," and "say they have no sin," and, from a want of sense of sin, they persuade themselves they have no need of, and so learn to have no liking for, a Saviour. Alas for them! Dreamers in a great reality, children of the night, hurrying to the land of shadows, when, would they but wake and strive, they might "make for the morning." Such, not sound in heart, must surely at last be "ashamed." Let us, oh! let us remember that we need that "soundness of heart" which will really lead us to look for the "Light of Life," to look towards Christ. Let us, oh! let us remember—to quote the words of a great teacher—that "the way and direction we choose to look make a great difference as to what we see and what we do not see."¹

(2) And again, following Christ's teaching, "soundness of heart" implies that we try earnestly to shape our conduct in accordance with the teaching we receive, and have received, from the "Light of Life." The history of many a falling away is, I suppose,

¹ Cf. R. W. Church on the Responsibilities of Belief.

to be traced to the gradual abandonment of those habits of Christian duty which are so strongly insisted upon by Christ. In other words, soundness of heart is faithfulness to the deepest *principles*. We are in a world of temptation, and these temptations present themselves to every department of our being. We are tempted in the region of thought, in the region of desire, in the outcome of both in act. In opposition to these are two broad classes of *principles*—those concerned with duty to God, embracing duties to our own souls; and those embracing duties to our neighbour.

V.

Principles are truths to which we can refer as under all circumstances and in all times unchangeable. They tower above the common things of life. Sometimes, like lofty mountains, they seem buried in the clouds; but if we raise our eyes and wait and watch, some peak emerges above the lower mists, some rock stands out beneath the sweeping shadows, and we have then a point of guidance for our wandering steps. The sound heart is especially marked by loyalty to *principles*.

(1) The growth in a Christian life, the clearer views of light, and the power to use it,—these things depend, we may rest assured, on a faithful adherence to those principles which touch our duty towards

God. For instance, to every sound and serious mind, the first of duties—may I not say the first of necessities?—is prayer. Probably the history of a failing faith begins in disregard for prayer. Communion of the soul of the creature with the Creator is indeed necessary to life. Given a world of business and hard work, tending by its very noise and necessary claims to “choke the Word;” given a time of seething thought, where the audacities of the human mind have laid upon them no restraint of religious reverence;—then, if the soul, through carelessness or deliberation, ceases to hold intercourse with God; if prayer is not practised; if there are no moments of a busy life set aside for quiet thought; if no gathering of the soul into itself to realize the Presence—the awful and blessed Presence—of Him Who is the Source of life and light; if old habits of Communion, self-examination, watchfulness, are abandoned,—what result is at least likely to follow? Alas! what result has too often followed? The practical wreck of a soul; a life abandoned to worldliness, or worse; and then the seared conscience, the hardened heart, the higher nature dwarfed or killed; or else the self-abandonment to unbelief, loss of hold of the Faith, and the mind and soul left to be the mere sport of the wayward currents of passing opinion, which nowadays, alas! so often take the place of religious faith.

Ah, brethren! believe it, often and often—I do not say always, for who has a right to dogmatize about every mystery of the human mind?—often and often the worldly coldness which pains us in a nature once beautiful and tender and strong; the miserable unbelief which dwarfs spiritual power in one once able to grasp and use the force of “the world to come;” often and often these are to be tracked to their source, not in any “difficulties” about revelation, nor in any mere pressure and necessity of hard and exhausting work, but in a flaw or warp in the will and affection, in the absence of a straight and sterling “soundness of heart.”

Cling, then, cling to these principles of duty to God, which are real guides and stays amidst life’s cross-paths and troubles; cling to your prayers; cling to your Communion; cling to the habit of some time for quiet thought on God, and the soul, and duty, and responsibility, and life and death, and eternity; so will your “heart be sound in His statutes, that you be not ashamed.”

(2) It is true also of the principles which touch our “duty to our neighbour.” Nothing so much at once shows and strengthens soundness of heart as loyalty to that fair and true and honest mind which recognizes sincerely and carefully the claims of others.

It is not merely that we owe others kindness, kindliness, and consideration, and that the higher

Christian precepts of "brotherly love continuing," of "each esteeming other better than himself," of "bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the Law of Christ," are to be anxiously listened to and practised by a follower of Christ; but that, in the moral order, it is of the last importance to our own strength and directness of character to be watchful and careful in the practice of those duties of equity and justice and honest dealing between man and man, out of which fallen nature so readily slips when self-interest, or ease, or the dislike to taking pains, or reluctance to face distasteful duty, take the place of principle. Ah, brethren, be careful to give patient thought to the just claims of others—servants, masters, employers, those with whom we deal in business as well as to friends and those we love; be careful to practise that watchful "moderation in thought and speech" which is so "closely akin to truth;" be sure in so doing to develope and strengthen that "soundness of heart" which indeed will save us from ever being "ashamed."

There is much to be thankful for in the times in which we live—there is, so we hope, greater love of justice, greater respect for goodness and truth; but there are not wanting at times alarming indications of a soft, an invertebrate morality. There is much in religion now to rejoice in; but here again we are sometimes startled by the spectacle of men taking an interest in religious things rather than being religious;

startled by a softness and sentiment which can never breast and overcome the troubles of life, the terrors of death, the assaults of temptation, the sharp rebuffs of disappointment, or the sharper attacks of sorrow. No; what is wanted is solid principle and determined strength; what is wanted is that "soundness of heart in God's statutes" which will certainly save us from shame.

VI.

And soundness of heart leads to and, again, is fostered by a determined clinging to what *we know to be right*. There are times to all of us of intense and deep and educating feeling; there are times of real insight, when we have *felt* the truth and *seen* the light. Then there comes the time of depressed and flattened life, when all things are commonplace, and we are tempted to an indifference which, if it prevailed, would tone the whole character; the time of darkness, when the very stars are covered, and the clouds prevail in the heavens, when we wander on with no light flashing upon us, unguided, miserable. Brethren, what is of crucial importance, then, is that we should *act* on what once we *felt* and *saw*; that we should *cling* to what for the moment we may not *feel*, but which past experience taught us to be *true*.

In directly religious matters this is a real need.

Holy Scripture means something when it commands us to "*hold* the Faith," to "contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints." Nothing can be worse, perhaps, than narrowness, unfairness and mere prejudice. Yes; it is perhaps worse to grasp your Faith with such pitiful weakness that you surrender it piecemeal or in entirety to the first philosophical speculator or the first insolent scoffer that happens to cross your path. The *duty* of the Christian is to *believe*. Doubt is at best a disease, at worst a sin. Faith is a moral effort, it demands a stalwart *effort* of the Will. That is one reason why it is said to "justify," to make us what we should be. The "sound heart" *clings* to the truth. Part of our probation is the "trial of our Faith, which is much more precious than gold." "Sound in heart," the vapour of unbelief will sweep harmless past you.

We must all meet, in a world like this, those who are the enemies to Christ and to the best hopes of the soul. In a world like this, too, and a time like this, when many of the old restraints have been relaxed and thrown aside, unbelieving literature of one sort or another must lie in the way of all. Brethren, take care. It can scarcely be right, scarcely wise, in a Christian to *choose* as companions those who are the declared enemies of his Master; scarcely right and wise to stain the mind with the teachings of an unbelief which is in direct antagonism to His revelation.

Ah! indeed, the "sound heart" is above them, and it is strengthened by a right and religious choice of companionships and choice of books and friends. "There are already many antichrists,"—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith." Ah! there is little danger of falling before unbelief, however presented with intellectual power, if there be that healthy soundness of heart in His statutes which saves us from being ashamed.

VII.

Brethren, there are—who can doubt it?—two special dangers assailing in our day the Christian life.

(1) There is worldliness—the temper which treats life, in all its thousand claims and duties, entirely apart from any reference to God; the temper which ignores, or mistakes, or decorates in false colours, the sin which besets us all; the temper which induces men so to bury themselves in things of the present that their eyes are wholly blinded to the greatness of their destiny. "The world," in the long-run, we know, is false and misleading, and "passeth away." In the long-run it never can *satisfy* a soul possessed of an undying life. Guard the "sound heart," which is too strong and steadfast to be conquered by the "world."

(2) And the other danger is anti-Christian thought. Questions of the most serious importance exercise

now the minds of men. Some in earnest, some in insolent and unscrupulous scorn, discuss, dissect, contradict, the Faith. The literary world takes up religious questions, as other questions, as a part of the interesting phenomena of life. "Faith" is misrepresented as narrowness. "Opinion" is glorified as a matter of personal right, property, choice. The good and simple-minded are often perplexed by unscrupulous and flippant attacks upon Revelation, and upon the character and plan of the Lord.

Brethren, in the midst of this pitiful strife of proud and insolent tongues, the "heart that is sound in His statutes" will listen to the debate, and regret the jeering; but it will "never be ashamed." It has learnt to be serious and watchful, to be humble and firm. It "*knows* Whom it has believed;" it has *touched* the Eternal, and felt the sweetness of the pardon, and the strength of the Presence, of Christ. Ah! men are led to anti-Christian *thought* often—I do not say *always*, but often—from great *moral* temptations. There is in many a hatred of taking trouble—a love of change; a habit of easily falling into the ways of less exacting religious belief and practice; a real pride in being considered "thoughtful"—an almost cant expression on the lips of literary unbelievers—a real delight and pride in leading in what seems unconventional, contrary to old-fashioned ways, which can, so well put on the appearance and manner of

“breadth” and “vigour.” There is in us all impatience of restraint, ready resentment to being curbed and held. These moral temptations lead the way towards anti-Christian surrender and the intoxication of unbelief. The victory over them is with “the heart that is sound in His statutes, and therefore *not* ashamed.”

VIII.

And then this soundness of heart saves us, certainly it saves us, from “shame” in two senses.

(1) First, there is that dastardly shame which is nothing else than moral cowardice.

There are times when, to the young especially, there comes the temptation to be “ashamed” of religion. Men, young men, who would face an enemy with unswerving determination, who would not flinch from rescuing one in danger in a burning house, who have never feared holding their own in any conflict which taxed merely their physical courage,—ah! how often, like S. Peter before the maidservant, before a sneer, or a jest, or a cleverly expounded “difficulty,” have they gone down before the enemy; been afraid to oppose what seemed so clever; afraid to stand by what seemed old-fashioned or less brilliant; ashamed, in one word—ashamed of Christ!

Moral courage is necessary to the Christian. The

“fearful” as well as the “unbelieving” are cast out without the city. “He that is ashamed of Me,” saith Christ, “of him will I be ashamed.” When you are tempted to *that* cowardice, try to think of the day when the sneerers and scorners and enemies of truth shall be ashamed—ashamed of their folly; when He Who is Truth and Goodness shall be ashamed of their moral turpitude.

There is another side of the picture. I remember a case in which a quick-witted unbeliever was sneering at Christianity, and stating, in a piquant and brilliant manner, those apparent difficulties which must surround any great system of mystery like the Christian Faith. He was addressing a young man with no pretension to practice in controversial debating, but of a singularly simple, manly, and sincere religious faith. “I could see he was wrong,” said the latter, in speaking of it. “I wish I could have answered him, but I was not clever enough to do that. I could only say I knew what the Catholic Faith had done for me; how sensible and how certain it was that Christ was the Head of my religion, and I *believed* in Him—that was all; and, though I couldn’t answer him, I was certain he was talking rubbish.” It was an outcome of that, brethren, which is better than dialectic acumen; it was a “soundness of heart” in God’s statutes which saved from the sin of being “ashamed” of Jesus Christ.

(2) And then there is what may be called "the shame of being found out." Terrible it is to think of, but in some cases it is the shame of finding out ourselves. Small deceits lead to great self-deceivings; small disloyalties to conscience lead to deep failings of character; small departures from the moral Law lead to rooted and hidden dishonesties of heart; the will is treacherous, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" a life by slow degrees may become hollow and unreal, without depth and determination, without solid foothold and real and abiding truth. The day of entire unveiling will come. The day will come when every secret thing shall be revealed; when many human judgments shall be reversed; when many reputations shall be shattered, and many characters of scrupulous goodness crowned. Ah! the shame and confusion of face of the unreal, the pretending, the self-deceiving, the wilful, and high-handed, who *would* not know or love or obey what was right!

Blessed, blessed shall we be if in that day we be found to have sought neither reputation for brilliance, nor a great name among men, but have longed and striven and prayed for a heart sound at the core, in desiring to know God's Will, and, when known, to do it; blessed, for then shall neither our Master be ashamed of us, nor shall we be ashamed.

Brethren, above all things, let us, then, remember that

nothing can be more important for us, in the struggle, in the effort, of this our human probation, than to establish in our souls the sovereignty, the splendid sovereignty, of *truth*. It will show itself in severe humility, in a *true* sense of our own nothingness and the depth of our ignorance; it will show itself in patience growing out of "the trial of our faith" bravely borne; it will show itself, above all, in a simplicity of character which deals in straightforwardness and strength with the troublesome facts and problems presenting themselves to the minds of us all. Truth of purpose, truth of aim, truth of effort, truth of will and heart and mind, in seeking, in obeying, the Will of God,—this is what simplifies, strengthens, ennobles life; this is what gives confidence in perplexity, and in sorrow consolation; this is what opens the spiritual eye to see the mysteries of God; this is what defends the soul against floods of worldliness, against storms of unbelief; this gives quiet strength, and calm patience, and knowledge of God, and likeness to our Master, and that fearlessness which will breast all difficulties and face all dangers in confident dependence upon God.

May we love it, seek it, have it! May we hate the doubles and twists of self-seeking, and moral cowardice and the earthly mind! May we have grace simply and perfectly to love goodness, to love God's Will! "O may my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."

SERMON VIII.

The Comfort of the Soul.

“ Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”—ISA. xl. 1.

THERE are two sides to the Gospel. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly severe. Indeed, to be true—as it alone of all religions actually is—to be true to man’s mysterious probation, severe it must be. It sets forth the laws of the kingdom of God, and shows man, in his state of waiting, having opportunities and encouragements to obey them, and destined to stand or fall by that obedience at last.

The Christian revelation has drawn very darkly, very distinctly, the lines of human sin and human sorrow. It has spoken in no uncertain tones, though in tones of subdued and serious mystery, of the results, the very awful results, to any soul of persistence, known and wilful persistence, in evil. It has partially lifted that deep and obscuring curtain which hangs across the future of the human race, and the glimpses

it has allowed us have not been without elements of soul-subduing and awful significance.

This is true. This, we might say, without undue presumption, must be true. A religion which deals with man as he is, in his wilfulness, his blindness, his rich abundance of higher thoughts, his desperate disloyalty to his better self; a religion which observes the laws of cause and consequence in human conduct, must be mysterious, must have in it, we may be very sure, touches of severity and a side of sorrow.

If, indeed, the aim of Christianity were to make man a fairly successful inhabitant of this planet for a few short years, and nothing more—its severe requirements might, perhaps, be dispensed with. If it were meant to make him fairly comfortable without taking the trouble to produce in his inner spirit a radical reform, then, indeed, what is awful and full of warning might be swept away. But the Christian Religion does not aim at making men comfortable except by making them better. First and above all things it is loyal to *truth*; it has to deal with *facts* human and Divine, and is in no way concerned to square them with the passing fancies of a corrupted nature. It realizes man's fallen condition; it respects man's greatness; it never allows itself to forget, in the exigencies of the present, the dignity and awfulness of his destiny. Yes, the Christian religion is severe.

But there is another side which must never be

forgotten. If the evil, the wilful, the proud, the high-handed, the self-seeking, find the Gospel full of warning, serious and terrible; for man in his sorrow and weakness, for man in humility and struggle, for the broken-hearted, for the longing, for the self-distrustful, for the sincere, the simple, the sorrow-stricken, the sin-laden, the true, the brave—from end to end of this mysterious revelation—there is one cry rising above all tones of severer music: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”

I.

Indeed, it is not inaccurate to say that “comfort” is a watchword of Scripture.

It is in the Book of Psalms we may expect to find the deeper spiritual teachings of the earlier revelation. And who does not know how rich that book is in sources of consolation to those who need it? Does the troubled spirit need a ground of trust in sorrow? It is found in God’s revelation. “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me. . . . I remembered Thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have received comfort.” Is the heart failing in view of the last great change? It is God Who can be leant upon as a strong Support in a weary way. “Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear

no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Does the religious soul inquire the meaning of sorrow? Even in affliction is peace. "Thy righteousness, O God, is very high: and great things are they that Thou hast done; O God, who is like unto Thee? O what great troubles and adversities hast Thou showed me! and yet didst Thou turn and refresh me: yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again. Thou hast brought me to great honour, and comforted me on every side."

In the same way, whenever the religious mind falls back upon its inner thoughts and sorrows in any age of revelation, the same truth of God's immensity of comfort rises before it at once. It is in the language of the Prophets, dealing as they do with all things from a deep and religious standpoint, or in the epistolary writings of the Apostles, where the subjective elements of religion are sure to be felt, that we may expect to find this. And there, accordingly, it is.

Does the great Apostle desire to revive the hope of the Corinthian Christians in the midst of a debased and unbelieving people? He reminds them that it is "God" Who "is the God of all comfort," and "Who comforteth" His people "in all tribulation." Does he fear lest a repentant sinner sink into depression? He reminds His fellow-Christians that a mark of their profession and a duty of their life is to "comfort"

such. Does he desire the Churches of Asia to stand firm? He sends his friend and "beloved brother" to "comfort their hearts;" specially also for the Christians of Colosse he does precisely the same.

So one may go on through the reaches of Apostolic teaching, and we shall ever surely find a confident fulfilment of the Prophet's teaching: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God."

For, indeed—what is perhaps more striking—there is the same tone to be noted in the Prophets. My brethren, perhaps never has moral wrath against moral wrong so risen to flood-tide, and so poured itself forth on the sinner and oppressor, as in the pages of the Hebrew Prophets. Never, therefore, has tenderness, when tenderness does appear, been so penetrating and so profound. Here we find the forecast of One sent "to comfort all that mourn;" here, too, the promise of comfort from God to Zion, and to her "waste places"—a promise reaching, as we know, far beyond the immediate needs of the people of Israel, into the history, sad and changeful, of the Catholic Church.

This is never so striking, however, as in the case of Jeremiah. He indeed, above all things, is the Prophet of sorrow. No one in the strange land of type and shadow so vividly as he, foretells "the Man of Sorrows;" no one mourns as he mourns, with unquenchable solicitude. Like S. Paul, his heart is full

of sympathy, and his life crammed with care. Well, listen. Listen to the man, desolate, contradicted, imprisoned, forsaken, where his prophetic eye sees across the narrow reaches of dying Time, the light, the everlasting sunlight, of Eternity.

“Behold, I will bring them . . . and gather them from the limits of the earth, . . . the blind, the lame, the suffering: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk in a straight way by the rivers of waters, a way wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations. . . . He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord: . . . their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.”

Ah! in a world of unutterable sorrow; ah! in a life where disappointment and depression follow fast on the heels of their happier forerunners, has ever a sound of gladness been heard upon the mountains, has ever a voice of consolation re-echoed through the chambers of the soul, like the voice of this Prophet

of sorrow, realizing what *is* the prospective gift of religion: "And they shall not sorrow any more at all"?

II.

Yes, voices of comfort come from the Word of God.

My brethren, it is not easy to wake up to what life is. Some men dream the dream of infancy, some the dream of custom. Some are so entirely victims to the conventions of a highly organized and grossly ungodly state of society, that life as it is, life in the reality of its struggle and its sorrow, they never grasp at all. Once waken to the world; once feel the wild heart-throbs of mankind; once have the ear opened to the low moaning—so low, so low, like the gasps of the dying—of those whose life is hopeless, heartless pain and sin; once get beneath the hollow laugh of the abandoned, or the well-bred despair of the worldling, or the satisfied surrender of the despondent; once face the fact; once wipe out the mists and dispel the shadows and let the breeze of an eternal purpose blow aside the clouds;—what do you cry for? what are you craving? Ah, my brother! in the lonely night, in the sad walk home from the churchyard when the rain is falling on that freshly folded grave, in the intervals between the spasms of pain on the sick-bed, in view of the wretchedness you cannot alleviate, in

sight of the sorrow for which you can find no relief, in face of the sin that makes you dizzy and staggering, in a half-unbelieving wonder whether goodness indeed *can* triumph after all,—what, what, what is your heart yearning to feel, and your ear to hear? Surely the voice of the wrathful and tender Prophet: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”

Remember, then—and take it for what it is worth—it is not in the sad song here and there of Prophet and Apostle; it is in *the whole tenor of Scripture* that the same voice is heard. If you do not find it in Scripture, if you do not find it in the Christian Religion, I should like to know where, where is it to be found? For consider; no book like the Bible has kept man’s eye so persistently fixed on the future. As time goes on, the abundant accumulation of means and appliances for easing off the pressure of actual life, the increasing stores of useful and usable knowledge, all help to fix man’s eye upon this his earthly dwelling, this the home of his passing probation, and his immediate happiness and sorrow. The Bible becomes “old world.” Religion finds itself confronted by a thousand pretentious competitors. Well, while life is young, and the pulse beats high, and illness has not brought its hour of lonely self-introspection, and death has done no decimation in the ranks of those we love—this is all very well. But life is not always satisfied by the newspapers, or comforted by the gossip of the

clubs. At last, at last, each human soul is forced to look deeper than the silly trifling that makes up nine-tenths of many lives—luxurious, worldly, political, practical—and then again starts into prominence an idea old as the race, but never out of season, young as the breaking morning, though hoary with ten thousand centuries;—certainly, certainly, we must die. The moment comes, will come, to thee, O immortal spirit, when there will flash before thee the vision of a Future. It is the old Book, it is the Christian religion, which gives thee a hope beyond this scene of turmoil and of sorrow; for it, it only, insists that goodness, and self-denial, and duty, and labour are never wasted; it, and it only, keeps before thine eye the great pay-day of eternity; it, and it only, reminding thee of the future, says, “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”

But, after all, there is one thought which dominates Scripture from which, and from which alone, can come any permanent comfort to the race of man. That is the thought, the great thought, of God. “When I am in trouble I will *think* of God,” was the spiritual experience of the Psalmist long ago. You sit by the Handeck under the pines, or stand among Dalmatian mountains, where the Falls of Kerka fling their tons of water, hissing and boiling, from the upper ledges down into the rushing channel, where they sweep away to sea. How the waters fret, and foam,

and toss, and tumble; glisten for a moment in the sunlight, or lie black and cloud-laden in the shadow, and then are gone! But the mountain-peaks stand clear against the untroubled azure, and the pines stand firm on the rocky ledges, and only *bend* to the breeze. Life flows on, events go hurrying past us; but we are dizzied and excited, and then depressed and saddened by the swift passage to a distant and unseen ocean, of all that is.

Change upon change! All things passing and vanishing away! Man longs for what will stand—for what lies deeper than the shallow thoughts of the moment, truer than the sensational screamings which do cheap duty for the teachings of conscience and the revelations of eternity. Man longs for God. And it is the blessedness of revelation that it brings before us, in all the vicissitudes of history, in all the chronicles of patriarchal life, in all the solemn tones of teaching and sorrow which come from the Prophets, in the history of the Church, above all, in the life of our Master, the great rebuking, consoling thought of One Who changes not, and never fails us—*the thought of God.*

III.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”

My brethren, there are three chief revelations of

the character of our God which bring this comfort home.

(1) First, Scripture loves to dwell upon *the mercy of God*. If this be true, or rather, since it *is* true, how blessed! The world is full of miseries; *that* none who know it, indeed, can doubt. The sunny optimist may shut his eyes to facts, and take the lurid flashes of his own nervous excitement for the scintillations of a real sun. Let him wake; let youth depart, and health become uncertain; let misfortune come to his "circumstances," and friends he has loved betray him, or go far from him, or die; then he will bid fair to fall among the pessimists—dreamers also, and worse, moral blasphemers, who are committing treason against hope. But once let him see things *as they are* in God's light—a world full, indeed, of misery; life at every moment subject to the assaults of sorrow—all looking bright now as a summer morning, and before the noonday all overclouded with storm—and then turn to revelation, turn to Christ. He finds good and solid comfort in the thought that even misery has a meaning, that there is "a purpose working to an end," and that God's power is above all things manifested "most chiefly in showing mercy and pity." For mercy is that virtue which prompts a mind to consider and, as far as may be, dispel the miseries of others. He it is, He Who, amidst all the darkness of our trials, "considereth whereof we are made, and

remembereth that we are but dust." Human pity may, alas! sometimes mean self-love, or Pharisaic self-seeking, or a hybrid virtue born of confused and craving motives; but the pity of God is a special force of His love—love employed in lessening or destroying misery; and all that arises out of misery is in conflict with the harmony and order of human life. Ah! how many have learnt that if they rest on God, sorrow they may have, and trouble may come, but they will *see* that sorrow has its meaning; they will *feel* that trouble brings a power and blessing all its own—for God is a God of mercy and tenderness. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God."

Who has not felt this aspect of the Divine character as forming one of the sweetest attractions in the Psalms? It is trusting "in the multitude of His mercy" that we are to "come into" God's house; it is for "His mercy's sake" that God is confidently asked to "save" His servant; "My trust is in Thy mercy," is the cry of the soul which is "joyful in salvation;" "Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens," is the glad conviction of a soul which would otherwise sink at the thought of a world lying in wickedness; "Oh, satisfy us with Thy mercy," is its prayer when realizing the unsatisfying character of all that is not of God. It cannot forget that indications of this are everywhere—"The earth full of

Thy mercy ;” nor that, as it is plentiful, so it is eternal—“Thy mercy endureth for ever.”

I repeat, with life so full of sorrow, with appearances against any solid happiness in a world like this, does not revelation “comfort” the saddened soul by insisting on the fact, the blessed and invigorating fact, of the mercy and tenderness of God ?

(2) And, again, there is “comfort” from the revelation that is given us of the *providence of God*. It is still a fact full of consolation that, amidst the wreck of many beliefs among our fellow-countrymen, the English poor, in all their many trials, cling to a faith in the providence of God.

The Bible, indeed, may be said to be a history of little else. It stands out in the sweet pastoral stories of the earlier patriarchs, in the changing fortunes of the chosen people, in the varying strains of joy and sadness of every Psalmist, and in the solemn warnings of the Hebrew Prophets.

But never is it so clearly taught as in the Christian revelation. Christ our Master, when drawing out the laws, the temper, the tone, the use, the influence, of His kingdom in its relation to the world, *insists* again and again on the need of resisting a restless, careworn spirit, and a temptation to over-anxiety, on the ground of a firm faith in the providence of God.

Brethren, no distorted notion of a greatness and majesty which rises above the levels of detail in

creaturely life; no perverted notion of the "scientific" temper leading men to forget that the God of order, Who works by "law," can suspend or override His own "laws," or direct and guide them to ends of His own; no "shortened" notion that God's guidance, if active, would supersede the duty and necessity of man's effort,—can ever really close the eye that sees and the heart that feels to the fact proclaimed in Scripture, felt in life, that God's power is not independent of His tenderness, and that the heart of our Father is full for us of loving care.

Ah! my brethren, we have plenty of sorrow, plenty of anxiety, plenty of toil; but, indeed, a secret of a life of usefulness, with inward peace lifted above fear of failure, unharassed by constant dread, freed from the thralldom of human approbation, of praise or blame, is a sense, a deep sense, that "the Lord is mindful of His own;" that we must do our best and leave the rest, trusting, trusting, with a confidence that temptation shall not conquer and sorrow shall not drown, that weariness cannot paralyze and failure cannot cloud, that the Lord careth for His people, and that "all things do indeed work together for the good, the eternal good, of them that love God."

(3) And revelation "comforts" by assuring us again and again of that from which springs His mercy, on which rests His providence—by assuring us of *the love of God*.

To believe that God loves you is required of you as a faithful Christian. Certainly, dear friends, the love for you, for me, of the All-blessed, can be for nothing in ourselves. Indeed, of this we are sure—the more we know ourselves, the truer we are to ourselves, and the more that self-deceiving dies, the more we must be certain that God's love for us must rest upon altogether other foundations than our fitness for it, or our moral beauty. Nor is it that we are His "image" which is the fountain of God's love. A poor broken image, indeed, of the unimagined goodness and the uncreated beauty,—to gaze at this would be, if one may dare to say it, to create disappointment in our Father's heart. No; "He loves us, not because we are like Him," it is well said somewhere; "but by loving us He desires to make us more like Him."

Ah! my brethren, God loves us, not because we are what we are, but because He is what He is. God loves us because "God is Love." To drink in the depth of that revelation will need an eternity; but surely, surely, as the thirsty land drinks the rain in summer, as the flower drinks the sunshine in the morning of spring, as you and I drink delight from the face, from the voice, of one we love, as sweet music carries the soul into the undescribed dominions of unfettered fancy and untroubled thought, as the light of stars is tender when we think beneath it, as the summer sea, as the withering grasses, and the

bending corn give a sense of peace, and whisper stories from a distant land, coming in the quiet evening, flitting by us in the falling light; so, so to the heart of the sorrow-laden and weary, so to the misunderstood and misinterpreted, so to the sick and mournful, so to the sin-laden and sad, comes with a power of more than music the thought which is the most blessed in all the records of revelation—"God loves *me*;" for "God is Love."

IV.

Brethren, we are in an age when new "religions" in rich abundance are being offered to fallen man. Of all these various growths from a corrupt and ruined nature, the saddest and the silliest, perhaps, is the so-called "Religion of Humanity." Sad and silly. Silly, because it advises you to "worship" humanity—*i.e.* either an unsubstantial idea or a concrete fact drenched in evil which can provoke no worship; sad because it perverts or travesties that glorious religion in which alone humanity can find its perfection and its rest. Its latest charge against the Christian revelation is that it cannot *comfort* fallen man.

There are, indeed, those who are not "comforted" by Christianity; but, then, that is so just in proportion as they are not Christians. A sense of sin brings sorrow, but it is balanced by the comfort of a sense of

forgiveness. Comfort, real comfort, must come in them who are seeking higher things. To turn to the conspicuous figures of Christian history, who had comfort like them? Plenty of sorrow, indeed, you will find in lives like S. Stephen, S. Chrysostom, S. Francis, Jacqueline Pascal, S. Paul—plenty of sorrow, but oh, such repose! The religion that offers pardon to the sinful, rest to the weary, strength to the weak; the religion which, after a life so confused as this life, offers a glorious immortality; the religion which puts God first and always as the Possession and Peace of His creatures—teaching of His mercy, pointing to His providence, leading the heart to realize His love;—the religion which puts all this in concrete fact in the Person of Him our Master, Who is God seen in the frail form of man, Who alone has been “holiest among the mighty and mightiest among the holy,” Who *is* the Providence of God to His creation, Who *is* His unfailing and evident Mercy, who *is* as well as shares His unexampled Love. The religion of Jesus Christ, my brethren, *this*, and this only, in the long-run, is the religion of comfort to souls broken but immortal, terror-stricken yet thirsting—thirsting for God. Live in heart and life on the resurrection of Jesus. Come to Him Who is the Light of Life. Then there will be no temptation to this groping in darkness; then, indeed, you will know and rejoice in the “comfort of God.”

V.

Brethren, there are at least three crises in life when you need this comfort.

(1) If you have fallen. For a soul to go from its better self and higher purpose, for a soul to sin—this is sadder than the anguish of a tormented body, or the crash of a crumbling world; this is a great catastrophe. How to bear ourselves when indeed we awake to the extent of this sorrow? How? How? Ah! repentance, though sharp, is blessed. Confession is trying; but it is the part of the believing and the brave. And then comes the voice of pardon, the mercy and the pity of Christ.

(2) You need it in care.

Care is the chilling frost which nips many a life of fairest promise. Care is the gathering of clouds of blackness—clouds that bring no rain. How to bear it? How to travel on with unperplexed, unruffled purpose? Ah! cling in faith to the teaching of God's providence; ah! forget not the watchful love of thy Father; trust and be brave.

(3) You need it in death.

Little we any of us know of the sense of failure, the unutterable helplessness, the affrighted astonishment, when in the throes of that tremendous trouble, the trouble, the punishment of death.

Then, then, to the heart which has clung to Him, there is surely a Presence near and supporting. O Lord Jesus, by Thy wounds and sorrows, leave us not in that most crushing trouble! Surely then, if ever, sweet is Thy mercy—the mercy, the pity, of God.

VI.

Brethren, we are dying creatures—that is, shortly, the sum of our sorrows.

In days when all things are readily questioned, and when no answer comes except as a speculation with possibility of truth; in days when great social evils exist and assert their existence, when energies are tasked to the utmost, and the results seem immeasurably below the needs; in days when the active vigour of all material powers is developed to intensity, and human invention serves to completeness the bent of human self-interest; in days when various families of the human race can interchange their thoughts and speculations almost mouth to mouth across the continents;—the old familiar energies of the grave are unabated, and men ask with renewed and eager anxiousness, “What is the end?” No real comfort unless death be conquered; and death is only conquered in any soul when he loves, and loves a Living One.

All, all the joy of the Gospel is gathered up in that. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." Yes; for we are loved—loved with undying interest by God; and we find in Him love and comfort, where are found life and light and all things blessed—in the love of Jesus Christ.

SERMON IX.

The Practice of Prayer.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”—S. LUKE vi. 12.

CHRIST our Master is indeed “the Light of the world.” That light for us is, above all things, vivid and assisting, because it illuminates with no uncertain glow what is meant by a truly religious character.

All Scripture is, indeed, full of this ; but that is only another way of saying that all Scripture is a revelation of the Mind of God, and that, too, by the Word of God, before the fulness of time came, when “the Word was made flesh.” All the teachings of the Divine Head of our humanity are but His own everlasting teachings continued on from their first beginnings among those whom He had chosen, and developed then fully as age after age He raised up and taught His own, until at last the perfectly wrought ideal and the completed and articulated type were made precise and evident in all their symmetry and pro-

portion, in all their attractive loveliness, in all their grace and beauty, in all their evidence of example and clearness of vision, by the revelation of His own human life.

That life, dear brethren, was to serve as a study for ever to those who desired to know the beauty of goodness, and who longed to have it reproduced in themselves.

Certainly, much more than human power was needed to effect such a work. Certainly, new *forces* were to be placed at the disposal of His people. Certainly, the Holy Ghost was to come, to guide, and teach, and invigorate, and train. But Christ Himself is the Ideal and Model of religious character for all time.

Nothing further can be hoped for, nothing further is needed. To imitate Him in all particulars where that imitation is possible for man, this is to have formed a religious character, this is to follow "the Light of the world."

And, indeed, in many particulars He not only *continued* what He had taught within the limits of God's earlier family; He continued what He had taught to the race even beyond the frontiers of "the election."

He is "the Light that lighteth *every* man that cometh into the world." Voices of conscience, deep intuitions, fundamental ideas,—what are these but

first rays in the human soul of that "Sun of Righteousness" which was at last to "rise with healing on His wings"? There are some departments of Christ's teaching and example where this is more than usually evident; and none more so than in the practice of prayer.

I.

Biographers of human heroes—the heroes of history or of religion—have ever felt that there are two sides to the life of which they have to treat. There is, of course, the outer life. Here we have to deal with the record of the man's external acts upon the stage of human histories, and amidst the crowd of human companions with whom he associates as he passes across that stage of trial and probation, when he has his short opportunity once and no more.

But this is only the exterior show, in evident and concrete fact, of something which lies far deeper. Each act of each of us is only the form taken by our real selves as they deal with the circumstances and persons *en rapport* with whom we are placed in the battle of life. To read beneath the surface motives and principles is the task, for instance, of a true historian. And, I suppose, the triumph of the modern historic method is the perception of this fact, and faithful diligence in acting accordingly.

It is the same with a single life. Yes, but it is

far more difficult. For certain common strands of human nature and character may with comparative ease become plain to the practical eye in dealing with men in the mass, which is the task of history; but when we turn to the individual, here there is need of a microscopic analysis to find the finer threads which mark and differentiate an isolated character.

Exceptional opportunities or exceptional skill, above all, when illuminated by exceptional affection, have made this possible in some notable instances. Any who have read the tender and powerful volume of Père Chocarne on "The Inner Life" of the great Lacordaire will at once understand me. Compare this volume with the ordinary biographies of the great French preacher written by others, and without depreciating the ability and wisdom shown in these latter works, you will at once be alive to the commanding interest of the former.

Nothing is so intensely interesting as the history of a human soul. At best we can have but glimpses of that mysterious other land. The landscape for a moment is clear and attractive, so subduing and full of pathos—like the wide expanse of country under the setting sunlight of the summer evening, or the masses of leafless winter woods under the sober half-light of the winter afternoon;—but hardly do we get the glimpse when all has changed and vanished, dimmed by the twilight or curtained in storm.

After all, it is the *inner* life of humanity which to human souls, such as we are, is of pathetic interest.

Now, the Gospels, from one point of view, may be called "the *vie intime* of Jesus Christ."

There is, we know, a world, an illimitable world, of glory and beauty, of deep truth and spiritual mystery, deeper than the ocean, higher than the heavens, broader than life, which still lies shrouded from our human gaze in the awful and majestic soul of Him Who is our Saviour and our God. There is, we know, region after region of increasing light, which all the powers of the blessed, all the penetrating gaze of the seraph and cherub who love and adore, can never wholly penetrate. Eternity itself, we believe, will not suffice to exhaust the supply of never-ending loveliness, for souls who yearn for goodness and truth, in the wisdom and beauty of Jesus Christ. Still, it *is* true that of His mercy He has partly raised the veil. It *is* true that the illuminated minds of the Evangelists were permitted to see something, and their accurate pens to record much, of the inner life of our most holy Master.

Brethren, it is so that we may study and imitate, and in nothing so carefully as in His practice of prayer.

What does He teach ?

II.

Well, first of all, He treats prayer as the outcome of a *fundamental idea*. At the very roots of our being are certain facts, widespread and constantly recurring, which defy analysis. We simply have to accept them. Whatever they may ultimately mean, there they are; we take them for granted as we take for granted the air we breathe, and the summer sunlight which gladdens us with the soft green of the grass or the myriad colourings of innumerable flowers. We find them, when we waken up to life and gain our first consciousness that in fact we *are*, as we find the soft blue sky above us, and around us the kind faces of loving friends. Only *these* are facts *in* ourselves. They are part of the very texture of our being; they are interwoven, and inextricably so, with the roots of our lives. Without them we should not be ourselves; with them we may be face to face with facts whose full meaning may at first lie beyond our explanation, but which still are our own.

In the lower department of our nature we name these *instincts*; in the higher, *intuitions*.

There was a celebrated philosophical doctrine which referred all human knowledge to *sensations*. This we have proved a thousand times to be false. But supposing any truth in it, it would be no necessary

consequence that our deep ideas as to the operation of our minds and certain apparently instinctive tendencies, follow upon our knowledge of the qualities or even the existence of matter in an external world. Certainly, *occasions* on which we exercise our faculties are often furnished by the impression made upon our organs of sense; but the *faculties* are prior to the occasion of their exercise, and the motive and manner of this exercise is as distinct from the occasion as Will, by whose action a hand is stretched to catch a falling apple, is distinct from the physical cause of the apple's fall. Our Lord by His action endorses the general testimony of mankind, that the practice of prayer is *intuitive*.

He rebuked, indeed, what was wrong, or exaggerated, or insincere in such a practice; He guided, indeed, by direct instruction as to its true and rightful exercise; He insisted on its proper function as an element in the total of human duty; He pointed to its powerful consequences and its blessed results; but He took for granted the existing idea—He Who had planted that idea in the being of His creature gave further light by His own example as to its direction and use.

Thus we find Him taking things for granted by His "when ye pray, be not as the hypocrites;" thus also teaching *how* the prayer is to be made; on what occasions it is needed; to whom it is to be addressed; what results will follow from its exercise; what

enormous forces by it are brought into play in the human soul ; what mysterious powers by it are placed at the disposal of man. But never does the great Teacher suggest for a moment that man could be so imbecile, so untrue to the dignity and prerogative of his eternal being, as to think of contesting or neglecting so fundamental a fact as the intuitive necessity of prayer.

Brethren, a time has come when human pride, human ignorance, human perplexity, it may be—in an age of darkness and sorrow—when all the treacheries of blinded human hearts and wills have discussed and denied the necessity and even the good sense of human prayer.

For us Christians—let us not forget it—that question is once and finally settled by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

III.

And, again, our Master teaches us that prayer arises out of man's relationship with God. It is that blessed exercise which in part springs from, in part consoles, the sense of human need.

(1) Man is a being of two worlds, and at once for his trial and his training he is endowed with a starting stock of desire. Desire is said justly enough somewhere to be "the raw material of holiness and the raw

material of sin." Is there anything more pathetic in human struggle than man's yearning and unsatisfied desires? Much is *wanted* in a world of *sorrow*. Here we need strength to endure, and forces to console. We want more. We want that heavenly gift which, by its potent alchemy, can transform sorrow into actual blessing. To do this ourselves is wholly beyond us. And yet it has been done. The noblest, the most unselfish, have again and again, if history is ever true, been found in the crucible of sorrow. To meet and deal with *real* sorrow, this is beyond the power of the kind and strong. I do not speak of the luxury of sorrow, which, like other luxuries, is indulged in intemperately by the selfish and the idle. Real sorrow is a tremendous trial; real sorrow can be touched with heavenly fire, and becomes, when so touched, a tremendous blessing. We *want* that fire; and if we be true to Christ's teaching and example, that want drives us to prayer. Remember your sorrow is a talent. Beware of misusing it. Pray.

(2) Much is wanted in a world of *suffering*. Suffering itself transforms into heavenly life if the teaching of that want is followed. As sorrow misused makes men and women selfish, so suffering neglected makes men simply callous, or despairing, or hard. We want patience—that Divine virtue of Calvary; and submissive love—that filial glory; and strength which comes from on high. When God is really believed

in, when Christ is really recognized as Teacher and Example, suffering drives us to prayer.

I have seen on a bed of suffering a young man cut off by a tragic accident, at a time when life was brimful of expectation and a sense of joy. I have seen his face the illuminated record of a brave and patient spirit, and heard his voice when every sound had in it the music of a better world; it needed not to ask the secret of the transforming influence; those around had learnt it—it was suffering used and sanctified by persistent prayer.

(3) Much is wanted in a world of *sin*. Wherever the mystery began, however the secret poison first infected our poor humanity, there it is.

O sinful brother, wakened from your evil dreams; seeing and feeling the consequences of your intemperance, your untruthfulness, your laziness, your worldliness, your neglect of duty—you know, in your better moments, what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God. What is it you feel? You *want* help—the help of forgiveness, the help of a cleansed conscience, the help of strength against future temptation, and consolation in the saddening memory of past falls. If your repentance is to be real, if your confession a power of strength and consolation, what must you do? Pray. You can—driven by the terrible need upon you—turn to a Father's heart.

There was much that was severe and trenchant in the teaching of Christ. Righteousness He held up, and would have, as the object of human education and human aims; sin He treated as the wildest folly and the most unutterable evil. But, side by side with this, was that overflowing tenderness to the lost, the wayworn, the repentant, the perplexed, which has made of His story "glad tidings of great joy" to a world like ours. Part of that tenderness was shown in His teaching on prayer.

There is more than that. Strange and striking as is the mystery, this is certain—that He, the Head of our humanity, entered into *all* its wants and sorrows in His own Divine Person. How He could *want*, Who supplies all needs, is only a part of the mystery of the Incarnation. Yet so it was. In our yearnings, dear brethren, and in the slaking of our thirst in prayer, we have the support and consolation in knowing, not only that we follow His example, but command His sympathy.

IV.

And, again, prayer is an expression of our *sense of dependence*. Religion itself has been described as little else than the energetic experience of such a sense. And, indeed, a religious man is one who has

a deep sense of what it is to be a creature; what it is to remember that "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" what it is ever to lean on an Arm stronger, by worlds of difference, than his own. The soul *leans* on God by prayer. Nothing is more plainly taught by Christ than this.

It has struck every student of our Saviour's life how every fresh essay of work recorded of Him is preceded by prayer. Men have sometimes spoken as if His acts and even the words He used were accommodations to human weakness, or ignorance, or superstition. To say nothing of the impossibility of recognizing the moral glory, much less of worshipping the adorable Godhead, of One Who would encourage by example or precept what He knew to be wrong or untrue, in this matter of prayer our Lord played no pantomime. He expressed His true humanity; He *depended* upon His Father's aid. Does He go forth to preach His marvellous mission? Does He choose the Apostles who were to be the nucleus and the guides of His Church? Does He walk upon the water, and allay the rising storm? Does He prepare to exercise His power in the resurrection of the dead? Does He march to the Mount of Transfiguration, where astonished disciples are to see a glimpse of His glory, while they hear Him talking with the denizens of another life of His approaching sufferings? Always with childlike simplicity, with earnest yearnings,

with a deep sense of need, above all, leaning on, holding by, a Father's hand, Jesus approaches each triumph, prepares for each trial, by the energy and earnestness of prayer.

V.

And He guides us—our dearest Master—to pray in a sense of confidence and hope. How earnestly He strives to rouse in us, if prayer is to be prevailing, a sincere conviction that we may *trust* God! “*Believe* that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Did any accent of venturesome confidence ever ring more clearly in the ears of fearing, hesitating men?

Our Saviour, indeed, points once and again to that great mystery, seen in every part of revelation—that *this*, as it is an energy of the human soul, so also it *depends* upon God. Prayer in one sense is man's privilege, prerogative, duty; prayer in another sense is the gift of God.

Brethren, it is well to remember that prayer is hope in activity. Prayer is the voice of hope. Hope is a great and supernatural virtue. By it we trust God for grace now, for glory hereafter. We hope, in fact, in God's goodness, and this hope finds its voice in prayer.

“By faith,” indeed, “we stand.” Its glorious light shows to the soul God’s reality and glory ; shows its own need and possibility—shows that to aim at anything but God, “from Whom we came, to Whom we go,” is to make *the* mistake which surpasses all others in its unspeakably tragic result. “We must love the highest when we see it”—see the goodness and tenderness, the majesty and condescension of our Heavenly Father. *Then* we trust Him Who is so awful and yet so loving, and we long for that blessedness which in Him alone we can find. “As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, for the living God : when shall I come to appear before the presence of God ?”—such is the voice of supernatural hope. The voice of supernatural hope, what is it but prayer ?

VI.

To turn to the definite acts of our Saviour in His choice of time and place may help us also *in doing our duty*.

The human soul of Jesus was constantly, indeed, in communion with the Heavenly Father. Never was that communion broken in its intensity and consciousness, except in so far as it was, for our sake, interrupted in the anguish of the Dereliction.

But although He was indeed the crowning Example of perfect human nature in constant communion with God, He did not disdain those helps and checks which are of such value to all of us in regulating and sustaining the devotional life.

(1) It is striking how our Master chose solitary places, and places of natural grandeur or impressive-ness, for His hours of private prayer. Lonely spots, deserted and unused by man, and the desolation and solemnity of mountains, seem to have been His places for private devotion.

Everything which Christ did is full of teaching—His silence as well as His speech, His retirement as well as His public ministry. Surely any withdrawal of Him Who is the Eternal Word, Who is the primal Reason and Experience of everlasting truth, has a profound significance. We are led at once, brethren, to feel, as we see the figure of the Saviour ascending the mountain for His lonely prayer, we are led at once to a deeper sense of the truth of the greatness, the awfulness, and the nearness of God. So very near us, and yet so hidden! So unspeakably holy, so awful in His goodness, so tremendous in His majesty! Even He, the Eternal Son, when He came as the Head of our humanity, found the solemn reaches of the desert, or the frowning rocks of the everlasting hills, the fittest places for that awful intercourse of perfect Humanity with the Father in Heaven.

Brethren, is there not, ought there not to be, something very homely, yet very reverent, in our approaches of personal contact with the unseen God ?

It has been felt, and rightly, by thoughtful men that the mountains of Scripture have their unique office of teaching. Prayer—so the mountain-chapels of our Lord's secret devotions teach us—prayer, the secrets, the high and blessed secrets, of prayer must be worked out, if adequately, there, in awe and reverence and alone.

Terrible was the mountain of the Law, with its thunder and its fire ; very solemn the crown of Hor, where Aaron was ungirded of his ephod and his breastplate to close his priestly office in the rest of the dead. Bright in the eastern light, and peaceful as a platform of vantage, must have shone the Abarim, when Moses, with his eye of solemn memory on an unforgotten past, and his eye of prophetic reach on the unsealed future, waited till he slept the sleep of saintly seclusion, sealed by the kiss of God. But above all, the mountain of Temptation, the Mountain of Transfiguration, and the hills consecrated by the lonely prayers of the great High Priest, teach us that there, in well-chosen places and in the stillness of uninvaded communion, our souls—each must meet its God.¹

¹ Cf. Ruskin on Mountain Glory.

Brethren, be very serious in having some lonely spot which you may consecrate to your communion with your Maker.

(2) It is well to learn, from the various references to Christ's private prayer, the duty of a regulated devotion. Men are sometimes tempted to plead that, as prayer should be the *constant* condition of the soul, so no special times are needed. It is by the same process of argument that the Lord's day itself, with all its peace and sweetness, its moral power and spiritual enrichment, has been ere now *argued down*, on the ground that all time belongs by right to God. Be sure of this, my friends, that in proportion as we consecrate special portions of time to God, in that proportion is all our time more and more consecrated by a recognition of His Presence.

VII.

Far deeper than this, however, goes our Lord's teaching and example in prayer.

Here He was certainly fulfilling His office as Mediator. In one sublime and simple sense, "there is one"—and only one—"Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." By nature, by office, there is but one. In another sense there are many mediators. The prayers of the saints avail for the Church on earth, as we know from Holy Scripture ;

but they avail, not in place of, but by the power of, the mediation of Christ. Our own prayers, when we are living near to God, avail for others. The law of mediation is one of those mysteries of the moral government of God which we may find it difficult to explain, but the truth of which is attested by the common feelings of mankind as well as by the testimony of Divine revelation. Because He is our Mediator, therefore, as members of His Body, we learn from Him to take our part in the Church's office by mediatorial prayer.

But, further, do we not see here the deep and intimate union between prayer as a practice and depth of spiritual character? The power of prayer—so our Master's example teaches—must depend upon spiritual condition; the closer the union with Christ, the greater the force of our prayers. If the heart and tendency of the soul be worldly and self-seeking, and indifferent to "the powers of the world to come," it cannot be in that light of wisdom and force of spiritual energy on which depends the efficacy of prayer. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Spiritual power comes from the culture of spiritual habits, and spiritual power becomes efficient for good in prayer.

And, again, here surely we are reminded of the joy and peace that come to those who draw near to God. God is Truth; for the intellect in reverent sub-

mission and contemplation to dwell on the truth is a satisfaction, the highest known to the mind of man. God is Goodness; for the will and conscience to be filled with God is rest to the moral nature. God is Love; when the heart's best affections go forth to Him Who is the Spring and Source of all tenderness, then it finds perfect peace. Surely our Lord, as the Head of our humanity, found in these quiet hours, when His work among the multitudes ceased, the rest and succour needed by every soul, which is really to *live* among the noisy scenes and constant turmoil of even what is called "the religious world."

Ah! my brethren, if we think clearly and watch closely, we shall often find the secret of the darkness and coldness, of the irritability and touchiness, of the fanatical lack of charity as well as the blind indifference to truth, is—want of prayer.

And why do we so fail in that which is the noblest occupation of fallen and redeemed man? The secret is in heart and will; we are not putting God first. "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," was the saying of our Blessed Master; and it is when the will is set, by His grace, to do Him service, that prayer is realized and used as the joy and power and blessedness of the spiritual life.

It is possible, remember, to our great loss, to be religious, and yet with a low standard of *devotion*. We may, if we will, be not content with such religion

as that, without which we would not be fit to be called Christians at all, but rather aspire further to an inner and deeper intimacy with God which is the ground of an abiding brightness of spirit, cheerfulness, and peace. "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace;" "He shall not be afraid of any evil tidings; for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord."

Ah! let us be watchful to maintain that deep reverence and strong confidence and living hope which are needed—which live, indeed, in prayer.

A growth in prayer is growth in a life of strength and peace. Spiritual senses become keener, spiritual feeling deeper, God's Presence a greater reality and a more abiding consolation to the soul that cultivates the practice of prayer.

This life is full of sorrow. This life is dark with care. The clouds gather thick and heavy—the clouds which bring no rain. Worldly affections only leave behind a weary sense of emptiness and want. What must we do? The answer is—We must pray. "Cast *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for you," is a distinct direction of Holy Scripture; our obedience to it is the sure way to a quiet mind.

Let our life, then, be faithful to *this* light of our Master's teaching. They are rich, however poor in this world's goods, who are enriched by the grace and gifts of God. They are poor, however much success the world may give them, who know not God.

Clouds of glory adorn the heavens when the summer sun is setting. A sky of splendour lies behind cloudy masses big with rain. There is a dark world about us, but beyond it a world of brightness. Sweet thoughts and bright hopes, a blessed dream, a heart of warm love, a conscience guarded from many a stain, beautiful and bright things filling the soul, cheerfulness in difficulty, hope in depressing circumstances, "songs in the night" where before has been no music,—these are the gifts and possessions of those whose life is illuminated by the power, the blessed power, of prayer.

SERMON X.

The Vision of Eternity.

I.

“ We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—2 COR. iv. 18.

HERE is a plain, we may say, a flat and point-blank statement of the Apostolic position. It is well to have things clear ; it is well that there should be no mistake. Christianity has many enemies, some fair, some unfair. Those who are fair charge against it its weakness and its faults as they deem them ; those who are unfair ascribe to it sins which by no honest showing can be placed to its account. It is well to have the position plainly put, then we can join issue with adversaries on a fair ground—like it or leave. Here is the light of its glory ; here, too, the head of its offending, the scope of Apostolic vision—that is of the Christian, as instructed by authority—is the vision of eternity.

“Our eye is fixed not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

I.

Among the many attacks on the Christian Faith, abundant now as always, one amounts to this—that the real source of belief in a supernatural world is to be found in defects everywhere to be noticed in the machinery and working of human learning and human observation, or else in the morbid activity of imagination, or else in positive mental disease. It is impossible, perhaps, point-blank to disprove such bold assertions, but at least three things are worth remembering.

(1) That while misguided imagination, or an unstrung mind, deals with *unrealities*, when the Christian Faith teaches awful and mysterious conceptions, the ideas so taught, though often indistinct and reaching beyond the *full* powers of immediate observation and reasoning, are not, therefore, unreal. Who can deny that the constitution of the human mind is such that while it is capable of holding truths of which yet it has no power to reason and observe to their final possibility of reach, and indeed of

which it has no *distinct* idea at all? The ideas of *substance, mind, infinity, cause*, have been instanced as such¹ that we can deal with them, have an idea of them, yet an idea so far from distinct, that, if an objector please to attack them with "shortness of thought," he may attribute them to mental failure. Against him, however, there will be the potent voice of accumulated human experience, although acting in a region where experience and observation, strictly speaking, cannot travel a very long way.

(2) And, again, the Christian Faith boldly meets the challenge. It asserts that there are many things of vital interest, which, to a mind unused to their contemplation, or, as S. Paul would say, "blinded by the god of this world," or so corrupted by merely scientific methods, that it cannot grapple with the facts of a spirit-world, must appear unreasonable or insane. It *does* teach what is beyond observation; it does expatiate in a region where the colour is as glowing and the forms as mysterious as any that mere human imagination has ever created. It holds itself reasonable and right in turning eager attention towards "eternal things."

(3) And further, those who are the chief masters in such "transcendentalism," the chief "victims," as unbelief would have us imagine, of such baseless

¹ Cf. Professor Mozley on Mysterious Truths.

insanities, have shown themselves far enough removed from the category of dreamers.

Here and now it is enough to name S. Paul. Was ever any more earnestly and steadily practical? Here we have a man who, on his own showing, is conscious of the ordinary trials of human weakness; who knows, and bitterly, the yawning chasm so difficult to bridge between clear views and lofty desires and the realization in practice and act. Here we have a man who deals with high thoughts and great ideals, and day by day is not slack in working the needful work for his daily bread. Here we have a man whose eye is fixed upon a dim mysterious future, but whose sympathies for humanity as it is are awake all round—for the poor woman by the river-side, for the broken-hearted friends on the shore of the Asiatic sea, for the runaway slave not forgotten in his own lonely prison, for the terrified and bewildered sailors on the deck of the Alexandrian ship. If such a one is weak in the endowments of humanity, if such the victim of "imagination" or "insanity," where are the strong, where the practical, where, I say, where are the sane to be found?

No, my friends, the insane, the dreamers, are they who limit the range of their vision to the passing phenomena of the moment; the wise, the strong, the useful, are they who fix that vision with unflinching persistence on "eternal things."

II.

S. Paul's words gain importance from those to whom they were first written. S. Paul had first visited Corinth in A.D. 51. His stay there had been of unusual length, for he certainly did not leave it until after the arrival of Gallio in the summer of A.D. 53. He had had, therefore, more than ordinary opportunities of studying Corinthian life and character. He had had much to console him, much also to depress; for indeed, in a world like this, depression and consolation usually go hand-in-hand in every life of ministerial labour. It was the scene, on the one hand, of many conversions. Here Stephanus and his family were the "firstfruits" of his teaching; here Aquila and Priscilla became his fast friends; here also Crispus and Gaius were added to the Church, and they, with Stephanus and his household, had the rare distinction of being baptized by the Apostle himself; it was here that Timothy and Silas came, bringing him much-needed financial help from Macedonia; here were other striking signs of success in the spread of the Faith—Crispus and Justus, Fortunatus and Achaicus, Erastus, Chloe, and Gaius are mentioned as being brought into the Church. Above all, we are struck with the fact that here, more than elsewhere, S. Paul put forth the supernatural

powers of the Apostolate; and so "the wonders and mighty deeds," the "signs of an Apostle," as he called them, must have impressed the Corinthian mind with the force and reality of "eternal things."

But if there was much consolation, there was plenty of sorrow. About the time of the Apostle's arrival, the decree of Claudius—whether issued on religious or political grounds it matters not—had driven the Jews from Rome. Vast numbers of the wealthy colony by the Tiber migrated to Corinth. To the Christians they had already been bitterly opposed in Rome, and they were little likely to be more friendly in Corinth. As a matter of fact, in large numbers and with great firmness, they opposed the Apostle, and he was only delivered from their worst machinations by the liberal and statesmanlike conduct of Gallio. But Corinth, besides being an asylum for the exiled Jews, was at once a great commercial centre and a city of unbridled licence. The very form taken by the heathen worship of this attractive city was only a cloak for the vilest corruption.

Nowhere, perhaps, so much as here had the Apostle forced upon his mind the irony of circumstance, the distressing contrasts between life as it appears and as it is, the startling distinction between appearance and reality. Himself struggling with intrepid determination for men of all races around him, suffering from physical weakness, harassed by financial anxiety,

opposed by his own people, shocked by the beautiful abominations of cultured heathenism, face to face with victims of frivolity, surrounded by men enslaved by the mere interests of time; the chance and change, the hollowness and vanity of things are before him. More than ever is he driven to grasp for use a permanent principle, and amid all detractions and all perplexities, with thoroughness of purpose and single-ness of aim, unwavering from reality, undaunted by danger, he fixes his eye ever more steadily on the changeless attraction of "eternal things."

III.

Brethren, at all times and in all lives, there are contrasts which should drive us to follow the Apostle.

The bee hums on her way and sucks honey from every flower; the breeze sighs in the grasses and ripples across the corn; the song of the mower is heard from the hayfield; and the merry voices of children, as they wander homeward from school, break the soft stillness of the summer afternoon; the stray sleepy note of the hedgerow bird, the rich mass of leafy glory in the woods, and the rich depth of colour in the rose-garden, all combine to give a sense of contentment and sweetness and peace. They *do* speak of better things, they *do* remind of a brighter

side to the darker clouds of destiny. Still there is sickness in the cottage, and poverty and sorrow and sin are not unknown. There are still sharp tongues which sustain the Apostolic assertion as to "a fire, a world of iniquity;" there is still existing injustice and self-seeking, unkindness and "cruel habitations." As life goes on with most of us it becomes more evidently true than ever, in spite of all the real blessings of our civilized time, that the world is full of sorrow because it is full of sin. "Change and changes" are everywhere imminent, everywhere charged with trouble. We still need a permanent principle which can be trusted; we can still "not be afraid of any evil tidings" only "if the heart stand fast and believeth in the Lord;" we can still truly breast and be strong against life's accumulated trials only if the eye be fixed with a power to pierce intervening obstructions—fixed on that which no change can affect, no chance can transfigure—only if the eye be fixed on "eternal things."

IV.

Eternal things! eternal things! It comes—the very phrase—like the swing and swell of solemn church bells across the hills on an English Sunday; it floats like the rhythmic swell of stately music across a sleeping sea; the heart bounds at the message, as the

heart of a troubled sleeper conscious of the reassuring nearness of a loved and loving face. In the day of thickest darkness and deepest depression, the religious mind takes fresh courage from the underlying certainty and support of "eternal things."

What, then—what may be something of the Apostle's meaning enshrined in this stately phrase?

(1) My friends, to "look" to eternal things is at least to watch for guidance, the assisting though severe requirements of the moral Law.

This must command our assent the moment we remember the real dignity of man. Man is a creature of two worlds.

We waken to life, and what do we find? Life is rising within us with its intoxicating strength; the world for a moment seems made for pleasure, and *we* giants to enjoy. For a moment! Ah! soon are heard the moans of the sufferers, the groans of the toilers, the complaints of the unsatisfied. The world seems a vast prison-house; inexorable, unpitying, seem the rules of its progress. Onward roll the wheels of its chariots, crushing the generations of men. Days are fair with sunlight, nights of magic beauty with the flushing silence of the moon and stars; but they will not stay. Years roll on, seasons change, age advances, the best-beloved leave us or die. This stern unfaltering nature writes everywhere on the heart with a pen of iron, the word "necessity."

And we feel it in ourselves. The build of our bodies, and in great measure the outfit of our minds, we did not make, and only within narrow limits can we affect with a touch of change; even moral proclivities and tendencies of character we *find* in us when we awake to life. The circumstances amidst which we were born were not of our making, and how have they not moulded with unrelenting finger the course of our conduct and the character of our work! Creatures of a day, with a few short years in which to rejoice, in which to sorrow, we seem in the grip of a grim necessity and hopeless of escape.

Yes, "the reign of law," in nature, in ourselves, appears to know no relaxing.

In another sphere it is also evident, but with what different results!

This is so; our very hearts reveal to us a higher code than that of fair beauty. Conscience, the yearnings of a nature yearning for, yet fearing, what is better, wakens us to an awful and splendid vision. Necessity is not the only ruler; there rises, like the sunlight from the sea on a morning of ruthless tempest, in all its majestic splendour, the moral Law. Splendid is its emancipating power.

It makes clean sweep of all petty conventions! Social place, intellectual endowment, personal beauty, —these may distinguish men among their fellows. Poor distinctions! Trade-marks of dying Time! Here

comes the great leveller; here the "Liberal Government" which will tolerate no "class privilege." That which *does* differentiate the creature is the disposition of the heart, the direction and determination of the will, the soul—the enduring beauty of moral worth.

Why? For two reasons. First, because you know that Law to be guiding and regulating, never compelling. It comes with its unabated demands; it comes with its attractive invitations. It will not abate the demand to add attraction to the invitation. Demand, invite, *that* it will; *compel*, it will never. It proclaims your dignity. Lofty as the throne of his moral freedom, man *may* be guided by it, or its guidance he *may* spurn.

Indeed, it will guide him—the moral Law—over rough rocks, and down hard paths of obtruding stones, through valleys where there seems the chill of death, and where certainly is the darkness of obscurity and neglect. It will exact of him often that he unclasp hands of love, that his warm heart grow icy cold with the hint of coming doom; it will require that he hear the rush of the torrent, and the roar of the thunder, or, again, that his feet be burnt with the parching sand of the desert, and his head never sheltered from the scorching sunbeams unless by the clouds that bring no rain. It will compel him to acquiesce in the death of many fair hopes and ambitions, and to carry them, with heartache, indeed, but

with face of unflinching resolution, quietly to their graves. True; but it will *compel* him to do none of these things. It will make him feel the majesty of his freedom in the doing, and, if done, it will point him to that "better country," where whatever he has spent for truth and duty is restored fourfold.

And, again, a law implies a lawgiver. And a law touching right and wrong, touching good and evil, *can* have nothing arbitrary about it; it *must* be another name for the revelation of those moral necessities in the nature of Him Who reveals, which make Him the glorious, the adorable Being that He is.

Two and two will make four in spite of any of us, and "there is no conceivable state of circumstances in which it ever can be right to do wrong." So far necessity comes in all along the line of "the reign of law;" but arithmetic has no effect upon our real and inner nature, and the facts of the multiplication table, though real and eternal, do not imperil our salvation. But the laws of right and truth and duty, the need of consecrating self and speech and time appropriately to God; the need of paying due honour to God's appointments of authority over us in this life; the need of respecting the place of others, of considering life either in its transmissions or maintenance as a thing deserving awful reverence; the need of governing not only acts, but motives and interior thoughts;—these, while they cannot change or leave, are freely

offered for our acceptance, may be by us rejected, but if so, must be so at our peril, for *these* touch the deep things of God's nature, and the deep things of our own.

On the uplands of Wurtemberg I found, in the fog, the path traceable by means of posts placed at no impossible distances, where reasonable efforts were rewarded by rescue from a perilous track. We in life, my friends, have to traverse many uplands, and the way is not always plain to see. Well for us—ah! well indeed—if we hark back to our guiding-posts in a world of blinding mists and driving rains; if we struggle to do right firmly, fearlessly, with simple purpose, because it *is* right, and regardless of the many voices, abundant in the world, of contumely and scorn. Well for us if we return again and yet again to clasp the well-worn and irremovable principles of the moral Law. Well for us all—well indeed—if, in the midst of a world where so much is changing, we fix, with Apostolic fervour, the force of our vision on “eternal things.”

(2) To gaze at “eternal things” is, again, to fix the eye of the mind in something like habitual contemplation on the great thought of God, and of that mysterious but approaching future which we habitually associate with the nearer consciousness of His Presence.

Scientific discoveries travel by means of the solar spectrum, travel up the celestial path of a ray of

light, and discover the substance of the sun. Here we travel up the teachings of the moral Law in their effect upon the human soul, and we find—God.

It is truly argued that from the appearances presented to our senses we discern the individual creatures around us in this lower world; we accept their appearances as indications of their presence, and we have warrant for accepting such as evidence from our “instinctive certitude” that it is.

The sighing wind in the summer woods; the sympathetic sway of the sorrowing woods themselves; the gathering accumulation of threatening clouds; the jagged peaks of threatening mountains; the stern and distant crests of unrelenting ice; the voices of the birds in spring; the wash of moonlight on a summer sea;—these, and such as these, give to our minds representations of things each with the measure of truth appropriate to itself. From these we form instinctive perceptions of many things beyond the actual touch of present sense; again, from such we generalize and form no untrue, although perhaps a somewhat inadequate, idea of Nature—of Nature in a majesty, extent, immensity, which distances in its reach the rapid progress of our imaginative journeyings. So we are conscious of moral facts from which we learn of God.

Conscience witnesses to the real existence of right and wrong. It does more; it accepts, admires, ap-

praises, does homage to the moral Law. It goes further; it applies that Law to the individual life, and passes judgments, from which it is felt there is no appeal, on the conduct of the individual life. Further still, it reaches beyond itself; it teaches of One in Whom that Law finds its necessary embodiment, and Who issues these unalterable decrees.

Muddy waters reflect with an inferior degree of clearness the objects which shine on a clear and unruffled surface in perfect symmetry. There are those consciences which clearly speak the truth; there are also those whose promptings may not be always and everywhere correct; but *all* witness to an external lawgiver—all teach of God. To deal wisely and well with conscience; to listen seriously to its teachings; to permit the mind to dwell with serious and practical consequence upon Him of Whom it witnesses, is indeed to be gazing on "eternal things."

It is of the last importance—yes, the most vital necessity—thus to act. This is nothing else but a true religiousness of mind. And from this we may remind ourselves, in passing, how truly a religious temper follows from a conscientious faithfulness; how truly, also, alas! shallowness in religion is the result, the necessary, the natural result, of a neglected or a blinded conscience. And again, although conscience and the moral sense are ever dealing with present conduct, who will deny that they point

with persistent finger to the certain and solemn future?

The fair and manly face of a leading figure in the "Purgatorio," in the Dresden Gallery, is gazing upwards and onwards. His eyes of Saxon blue are filled with unshed tears; his hair of Saxon gold is tossed with self-forgetting *abandon* behind the stalwart shoulders. He has forgotten all the sufferings and sorrows in the sense of the coming glory. So with conscience. Bad? Then the mind is upheaved and disturbed with regret, remorse, compunction—the sense of coming doom. Good? There is the joy of self-approval, and the sweetness of a heart already warm with the "Well done, good and faithful."

Yes, God and the Future—these are eternal things. "A few short years shall roll," and we shall be: *What* we shall be, *Where* we shall be, are among the unimagined wonders which entrance and subdue the soul. Little we know of it—*this* we do know. We shall know ourselves with a sense of startled astonishment such as has never been ours before. Ourselves! Not in the mystic garb of self-interested deceiving which has made our pitiful acts of goodness loom gigantic like headlands in a misty dawn, not in the refracted splendour of the easily perverted opinion of too indulgent friends; but in the cold, clear light of undisturbed *reality* we shall know ourselves as we are—yes! *as we are*. This also. More closely,

more luminously, shall we be conscious of God—of God in the stern necessity of His perfect righteousness, in the blinding, the dazzling splendour of His uncreated beauty. Ah! my friends, to live, to *try* to live in the power of that Presence, and in the serious sense of that certain future,—this is to be gazing at “eternal things.”

Do we do it? Are we striving towards it? Ah! my friends, how many live in peaceful, undiluted selfishness; how many more in a selfishness carefully veiled lest it should startle and embarrass themselves! Certainly it is the duty, as it is the wisdom, of every one of us to raise the level of our serious thoughts and to enlarge their survey. A lofty and serious sense of life and its duties, a true and dignified way of meeting death and its mysterious consequences,—this comes from the deepening habit of gazing on “eternal things.”

(3) And need I add that to look to “eternal things” implies a personal and habitual grasp of the redeeming work of Christ?

Certainly every soul which is alive to its own real condition must be conscious of two things—its failures and its weakness. Conscience as well as revelation force on us a darker name than “failure.” We are conscious of *sin*, and if ever so conscious and ever so repentant, no less do we feel the difficulty of change, and the unhappy manner in which

we seem to be balked in our efforts—our best efforts—towards a higher life. We are weak as well as sinning.

My brethren, once awake to this, we must either dismiss the whole subject and refuse to think of it, which amounts to an intellectual as well as spiritual suicide, or we must face the fact and act accordingly. And if we do—if we do, then nothing can come to our aid with such prevailing energy as that whole world of mysterious power—the work of Christ.

The transforming force of repentance; the sweet mysterious efficacy of absolution; the majestic mystery of the Holy Sacrament, in all its simplicity, in all its awfulness; the sweetness and potency of prayer; the united vigour of holy souls in the communion of saints; the tender touches and the powerful effects of grace in all its secret, active, elective workings;—all these run up into the remembrance and contemplation of a Person and a Life. Jesus Christ in His majesty and tenderness, in His simplicity and strength, in the “sweet reasonableness” and awe-inspiring authority of His intercourse with men, in the pathetic pity and sorrow of His precious Blood,—He, He is *the* central Figure and Summary of God’s relation with His fallen creature; to make Him in some real sense the Centre of thought and Spring of purpose is indeed to be gazing at “eternal things.”

V.

To speak of eternity as a guide in life appears, indeed, to some men to be merely dealing in "transcendental crotchets." What is called "the practical mind" of the age shrinks from such unpractical facts. Well, "truths," indeed, "are only true for those that have *some* understanding of them." But there is *one* fact of which surely all have "some understanding," and which gives a "practical" colour to the thoughts of eternity. Do what we will, look where we may, we are all of us, dear friends, confronted by the serious, the certain fact of death. It is surely impossible for the mind altogether to abandon *some* speculation on what it may be doing and where it may be, after the lapse of, at most, a few short years. "The things that are seen are temporal." Yes, indeed; fair as sunset on the summer sea, fair as the breaking of the winter dawn, fair as sweet faces in a quiet home, and pleasant hours in resting converse with our friends. One thing is certain—these must end; certainly we must die. Is it not the part of common sense, in view of that coming certainty, to keep the eye on the vision of eternity?

Above all, for the Christian this question is settled by Christ. He has thrown the light of His Word and His character on the important question of a life beyond the grave. It is not so much that our dear

and blessed Master taught directly about eternity, but that He lived a *life* most beautiful, most attractive, which, on any other hypothesis than that of an eternal world, was unquestionable madness; and also that in all his *teachings*, principles were implied or enunciated to work out which demanded eternity. Turn out the thought of eternity, with all its beauty and its awfulness, from the mind, and the teachings and the life of Christ become unintelligible mistakes. Include, dear friends, the thought of eternity, and you have religion in its truest sense. No longer the religion which is most usually accepted by the mass of men; a religion taking little account of sin, and encouraging at best a vague sense of duty and piety; a religion looking at results, not motives; a religion of a limited number of useful virtues, with no sense of interior recognition of God, and in whose vocabulary the most severe of words—"contrition," "sorrow," "absolution"—find no place. You have a religion taking serious account of the inner relation with God; a religion which colours, influences, guides, the most secret actions of time with a pervading sense of eternity.

This, believe me, this religion creates *that* character and life which, under whatever varying phases of civilization, is the character loved and encouraged by Christ. For, indeed, He surely encouraged that class of mind which is *widely* practical, which takes account of its *whole* life, not merely of a part; which never

forgets the nearness and certainty of another world. The light of His life shows to all who have eyes to see the need of earnestness, the possibility and beauty of eager and serious thoughts of God, the beauty and straightforwardness of temper which is sure to be theirs from whose minds the stimulating power of death and eternity is never far away.

VI.

Brethren, two things remain to be said.

(1) It is the habit of taking into our account "eternal things" which marks the truly religious character. S. Bernard reminded his hearers long ago that God approaches us both in justice and in pity by means of the humanity of Christ. In His humanity He was "tempted as we are;" in His human nature as "Son of man" He received "all judgment;" and to the feet of "the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" the sinner can come—come as the Magdalene came before Him to anoint them with precious spikenard. But "the Head of the Christ is God"—His Divine nature also may receive of our anointing; and what the head and feet will receive from the sinner, that also may be given *now* to His Body, the Church. That *it* also should be anointed Christ teaches; for He Who gave His human body to the anguish of the Cross for it, would have us also not forget its needs.

Compunction, devotion, piety,—these are the triple unguents with which the sinner may anoint the head, the body, the feet, of his Lord. Christ has shown us, in other words, that the heart filled with a sense of eternity, and it alone, is in true and tender relation at once to God in His greatness and humiliation, and to His Church in her greatness and sorrow.

(2) And it is the truly religious character which wins the blessing of peace. How calming, amidst the fierceness of controversy, the bigoted assaults of merely tentative and yet self-satisfied science! nay, more, amid the constantly disturbing trials of those little worries of daily sorrow which belong to the lot of all, how calming the remembrance of a higher destiny, and the sense of an eternal future!

Little reck they of the disturbance of time who gaze on eternity. These are they who can be practical yet contemplative, humble yet vigorous, self-forgetting yet full of resource; who can be bright yet serious, grave yet full of sunshine, large in view yet willingly and wisely loyal to the claims of life's details of duty; who do not fail in sympathy for others' trials, because they deeply feel their own responsibility; who if they fall lie not long in sinning; whose repentances are deeper, quicker, more lasting than their faults; who *grow* in the power of spiritual apprehension, and gain ground in the exercise of a disciplined life; who have "songs in the night," and

sunlight on the darkest day; who draw gentleness from the springs of laughter, and sweetness from the fountain of tears. These are they for whom the grave may, indeed, have sadness, but over whom it cannot assert a sway of unconquerable gloom; for whom life is filled with ever-advancing experiences of blessedness, and for whom Death the destroyer has lost the power to dismay.

Brethren, let us live for eternity.

Look, I beseech you, look more steadily and constantly *through* what appears, to what shall always be. Blessed are ye, immeasurably blessed, if ye have grace in a world of shadows to fix your eyes on the visions of eternity. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

SERMON XI.

The Vision of Eternity.

II.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—2 COR. iv. 18.

SUCH words as these may be considered, my brethren, in many aspects, for they afford an instance, a striking instance, of the way in which Christianity extended the horizon of human life.

Who could imagine any of the great philosophers, any of the greatest poets of the external world, so describing their end and aim. To place eternity in practical relation to human action—this was reserved for our Divine Master; this was part of the illumination thrown on human conduct and destiny by Him Who was “the Light of the world.”

The text, as I have told you before, contains an Apostolic principle. Here we can read the secret which explains and accounts for the conduct of a

remarkable life, and the attractive spectacle of a mixture, perhaps unparalleled in human annals, of high thought and homely yet heroic action in a great career.

We have, indeed, a typical example, for instance, in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Acts, of the bearing of this principle on the life of S. Paul.

It is a startling scene, that on the steps of the fortress of Jerusalem. Before us, in the narrative of the Acts, are the representatives of three powers. (1) There is the representative of civil authority judicially indifferent—as was not unnatural—to the details of the special question, but resolute in the preservation of social order. (2) Then there are the representatives of fanaticism, blind as usual to the claims of reason, of humanity, even of fact, surging with the maddest uproar, thirsting like ungoverned wild beasts for the vengeance they desired. (3) And then, between these two, there is the unruffled calm of the dauntless Apostle. There he is, bound with a double chain, borne in the soldiers' arms owing to the violence of the crowd, only begging for an opportunity to bear his witness to "the things which he had seen and heard;" only striving with conscientious earnestness, as we should say, "to inform public opinion," which yet he never feared and never flattered. Here is the practical

power of eternity. For if a gazer had asked, "Why that calmness? why that courage?" the Apostle certainly might have answered, as here he tells the Corinthian Christians, "The scope of our vision, the thing on which we really and finally fix our eye, is, not the things seen, but the things that are not seen: 'for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'"

I.

Brethren, let us guard ourselves against a mistake as we stand on the threshold of the question. This form of expression is not unusual in Holy Scripture, and it would appear to amount to this: "We do not neglect to look at the things of time, in their due order and fitting place; but the scope of our vision is the land very far off—the land beyond the grave." There can be no doubt that *any* absolute and fantastic neglect of the duties of time, a neglect as irreligious as it would have been impossible, was quite away from the intentions of S. Paul. S. Paul was, above all things, an eminently "practical" man. The man who brought all his highest reasonings down to the final result of pointing homely duties; the man who did not forget, amidst his "care of all the Churches," the happiness and sufferings of a

single slave; the man who deemed the regulation of the head-dress of women in church a matter not below the dignity of his Apostolic guidance and command; the man who, when his weary work and suffering were over, sat down with his tired eyes straining over the stitches to ply the needle as he made his tents, in order that honestly he might pay his way;—he was not the man to teach any such unreal “other-worldliness” as would be impossible in life’s practice, or to seem to absolve men from the most simple and elementary duties. No; as our Master warned His disciples against being *over-anxious*, so S. Paul taught his Christian converts, not the neglect of common duties, but the need of putting things in their proper place. “Work in time,” he seems to say; “fulfil simple duties which God lays upon you; but be not swallowed up in what is present and passing; keep your eyes steadily, earnestly fixed on eternity.”

II.

Let us consider this, then, as it is in fact—a principle of Divine guidance and government—this due dealing with time and eternity.

Time and eternity! We cannot name them without anxious questions rising at once to our lips. What is

Time? Is it a mere "phantom of succession"? Is it a trick only for registering the order of our acts? Is it a subjective sensation? Is it a fact external to the mind? What is Eternity? Is it a mere extension of time? Is it, in fact, time without a *terminus ad quem*? or is it "life fully possessed," consciously possessed, by a living intelligence? We do not know. Such questions altogether baffle and perplex us; but, creatures as we are certainly of two worlds, such questions will not leave us when once we awake to think at all; for, do what we will, we cannot but feel that these truths, however mysterious, are truths, that these words represent something marvellous, inscrutable, but significant.

Time and eternity! Like muffled bells they roll their echoes across our souls, as church bells roll their solemn music, when the old year is dying, across the wintry woods, across the tracts of snow. Time and eternity! Like music, heart-piercing and sad, heard upon stretches of untroubled water on a quiet night, like voices plaintive, penetrating, coming to us from dear dead friends in the land of dreams, they carry with them thoughts solemn, overwhelming, to fill the heart with awe and wonder, and the eyes with tears. The due dealing with these mysteries, the meeting of Time and Eternity, the using one in view of another, —this, at any rate, is a principle of Divine government, and must be reckoned with by man.

III.

(1) And, first, it is always well to recall that this falls in with the evident constitution of our complex nature. Man is a being of two worlds. As an animal, he has to deal with this mysterious body, so beautiful, so frail, so capable, so able in its action, so ready for a swift corruption under the action of the chemistry of the grave. He must support it, exercise it, rest it. He must increase his kind, and care for their welfare. He must train the body, remembering its material requirements and its dangers, and then, as the Christian creed teaches him, he must remember that, like "the body of Christ's glory," it too, in some strange way, has a destiny beyond the grave.

But man feels within him aspiration and desire that here are never wholly satisfied. No; they may be drugged, they cannot be satisfied. The saddening sunset and the hopeful yet pathetic dawn awaken in him strange and troubled longings. He is touched by the voices of sweet music; he is moved by the innocent faces of the little children; he is cheered by the breath and colour of the opening flowers; he is thrilled by the music of the sighing winds. Man is a spirit—a spirit prisoned in a prison-house of time, looking wide-eyed into a dim eternity.

His aspirations fall below his actions. His achieve-

ments are inferior to the promise of his desires. He sees good, admires, even loves it, and fails in the doing. He is a creature of sterile remorse or fruitful repentance. There is something further. Man is a fallen spirit. Whatever be the explanation given—

“There is something in this world amiss
Must be unriddled by-and-by.”

It is according to the sense of wisdom, it is according to the sense of experience, it is according to common sense, that he cannot neglect the fact of Time, that he must be awake to the fact of Eternity.

(2) Again, this principle explains the revealed condition of the Catholic Church.

There are, we know—to use human language—three divisions of the vast assembly. There is the militant division, in which we here and now fulfil our mortal probation, and whose work is towards the triumph of goodness, by an unrelenting struggle with the forces of evil. There is the triumphant division, in the perfection of the saints, now, as in the far future, mysteriously near to God. There is that other, almost more mysterious division, hinted at in veiled words of Holy Scripture—the division of those at rest or in purification among the vast concourse of the blessed dead.

“Division,” I have said. Brethren, I correct myself. There is One Body, and under the guidance and government of One Head, a blessed interchange of spiritual benefits and blessings goes on throughout all

parts of the Body, likened, as it has been, to the circulation in the human frame—an interchange of kindly offices of love and act and powerful prayer. This the Creed teaches us to name “the communion of saints.” And when the mind pauses to contemplate this mystery, at once we feel what we deem our solid foothold gone; and yet we know we are dealing with a vast reality. We are in presence of an awful mystery, seen and unseen, actual and in course of growth and being; we are at pause in the presence of Time and Eternity.

(3) The same is true, dear friends—is it not?—when we turn to the *object* of the Church’s life and action. That object is certainly to gather souls out of the world into the family of God—to apply to them the inestimable benefits, the blessed effects, of Divine redemption, and to train them for the greatness of their destiny.

Incidentally, however, and yet necessarily, in so far as its work is thoroughly done in them, it makes them fill well the place to which God has appointed them. It teaches them to be loyal citizens, faithful husbands or wives, good parents or children, honourable lovers, unfailing friends. It teaches them how to use the liberty which civilization has brought to all of us in a religious way; to carry religion into the drawing-room, the street, the workshop, the market-place; to raise and sanctify and make happy the things

of daily use and pleasure with the air and sunshine of another world. It "is looking," in fact, "not at the things of time, but at the things of eternity."

(4) Nor is this less true of the habits and methods of the Church. These strike men by their simplicity and splendour. They call down censure or they awaken enthusiasm.

Is anything more simple or more apparently belonging to time than the use of a little water and the uttering of a few simple words, when the child, in Baptism, is laid in the arms of Jesus? Can anything be more simple than bread broken and wine blessed in solemn words of prayer? Can anything be more patriarchal in its simplicity than the laying on the heads of the young the hands of an authorized officer of the Church? Can anything, on the other hand, be more august, more awful, more full of eternal power, than the coming of the regenerating Spirit, or the presence in mystery of the Incarnate Lord? "Time and eternity" rings through the Sacraments. Deny their real meaning, and you violate this pervading principle.

Why the Church's stately minsters? Why her pealing organs? Why her Psalmody tossed backwards and forwards by the responsive choir? Why her pleadings uttered with steadfast confidence into (apparently) irresponsive air? Why her altar-lights and special vestments? Why her absolutions and

benedictions? "For glory and beauty" and solemnity? Ah! that is an insufficient *rationale*. Can wood or stone, or light, or splendid material, or even solemn words, *in themselves* be anything? No. There is a twofold power, the outward and the inward—"Time and Eternity."

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

IV.

Track the principle on. My brethren, you watch the wide expanse of sea when the wind is in battle with the wild waves on a sunset shore. The great rolling ocean is before you, in all its depth, in all its restlessness, in all its immensity; then suddenly the inland-blowing wind turns up, against the wave's advance, a sheet of spray. For an instant it seems to pause and linger, each drop against the sunset sky a perfect crystal.

You gaze awe-stricken on the vast body of the Church of God—its depth of meaning, its mysterious height, its changeful storm-tossed history, and the distant horizon-line of its approaching rest; and then against the glory rises up, in all its dignity, in all its

singleness, in all its entirety, the human soul! Again one principle reappears, one melting into the other—
“Time and Eternity.”

“It is not time that flies ;
’Tis we, ’tis we, are flying !
It is not life that dies ;
’Tis we, ’tis we, are dying !
Time and eternity are one,
Time is eternity begun ;
Our life can know no dying.”

Brethren, the soul individually, earnestly, with fixed desire, and an intention and struggle towards unflinching obedience, must here in time gaze on “eternal things.”

We do not waste our time if I repeat we gaze upon them (1) as *the moral Law*. Morality, the true respect for right and wrong, is not religion, but it is the bold basis of all religion. To know and feel, to recognize and acknowledge, what is due and owing to God and man,—what is this but to grasp the meaning of the Ten Commandments? what is this but to be sensible of our real place, and then, alas! of our weakness? what is this but to feel that which drives us to Christ? Two and two must ever make four; and the moral Law, like the mathematical, can never change. It has its roots and beginnings in the nature and character of God. It is not a merely changeful and conventional arrangement, nor yet an arbitrary and capricious decree, that God must come first; that other objects

of idolatry of whatever kind—love of money, as the Apostle seems to teach in undertones—shall not usurp His throne; that His awful Name, and all that is involved in the gift of speech—the image in man of the Eternal Word—shall be treated with a reverent sense of responsibility; that God shall have a portion of the limited space of time that is ours, consecrated to His special use; that authority, and specially parental authority, be respected as the shadow of His rule, and by consequence be used with due thought for the children, for the governed, so as not “to provoke to wrath;” that the sacredness of life, the sacredness of property, the sacredness of the power of handing on the gift of life, the sacredness of another’s character and good name, and all the claims of truth, the sacredness of the motive-springs of the human heart from which actions are born;—be respected. No, it is an “eternal thing;” and the welfare of the human soul, born for an eternal country, depends upon respect being paid to such a fact of eternity.

(2) And, again, the same is true, by implication, of the need of recognizing our individual relation in all things—the highest, the lowest to—God. All affections of the heart must be allowed or disallowed, all acts of the life must find their being, all aspirations of the heart, all choices of the will, under the eye of an unseen Father. His will is the true law of life “Whether we live, it is unto the Lord we live; and

whether we die, it is unto the Lord we die: whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's."

(3) And has not the soul in view, as a practical reality, an unbounded and unimagined future? Sometimes it seems like a dream, sometimes very awfully near the present; but it is always a certainty though always beyond the reach of exact knowledge. Think what it will be to us creatures of sense, children of time, victims of custom, slaves of habit, to live in conditions where these are utterly swept away! Think how blessed if there be to us places and conditions where all that has been best and most beautiful, truest and most pure, all that is loftiest and most elevating, without danger of the depressing influence of sloth, without fear of our low views and earthly tendencies, shall be ours irrevocably and for ever! In sin or worldliness well may we fear a future in which this miserable self, from whose thralldom we long to escape, might be stereotyped for ever; but in penitence, in efforts towards true life, in our better moments and higher hours, how stimulating, how consoling, how elevating, to feel sure that what is good and blessed and true, high and tender affections, noble resolves, holy purposes,—that these have their true power in an eternal future, and that that future is ours!

Ah! brethren, in proportion as we throw ourselves forward into that future, so our capacity for all that is most worthy enlarges; to live with an eye on the

future is to make the present rich in action, and to free it from the paralyzing effects of cowardice or fear. The human soul exiled from its natural home must lift its eyes above the mountains and see the morning dawn. "We are looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

V.

We have seen, dear friends, one eternal principle as it applies to human nature at large, to the great body of the Church, and then to the individual soul, which forms one living constituent element in that sacred Body.

Raise your eyes and gaze on the great Head of the Body; here you will find the same principle apply.

(1) This is true if we consider the general character of the life of our Master. No life ever lived, save His alone, can have any pretence to be a perfect life. But the more we examine His, the more we find it to have been so. It was made up of the most usual occupations and common duties. It was familiar with sick people, with little children, with poor lost women, with young men in their ardour and old men in their depression and decline. It was a life at home with

every class and every rank, never too great for the lowliest, never too enamoured of the lowly to forget the claims of souls placed in higher courtly rank. It was a life in harmony with itself, in perfect balance, with no wild over-swaying enthusiasm, no unbalanced purposes, no unregulated desires, yet full of fervid sympathy and alive with tenderest love. It speaks, and has ever spoken, to every race as well as to every rank, though, according to country and lineage, it was the life of a Jew. No human soul of any country, any condition, either sex, but feels in it, when once it turns to it, a kinship and a help. "Holiest among the mighty, mightiest among the holy," no one has ever touched mankind with half the force of sympathy and authority as He. For amongst all His common duties, filling a humble place in His home or in His country, never did there flag an elevation of thought and purpose which were far above the world. No one can seriously contemplate the example of the Lord Jesus without feeling in that marvellous character a moral meeting-point of time and eternity.

(2) The same, brethren, may truly be said of the words He uttered.

His discourses, His recorded conversations, arose naturally out of the circumstances of the time. And yet in their force and penetration they live for ever, and lose no strength. Think of the depth of meaning in those marvellous utterances. Simple they seem to

be, but in fact they are the sources of centuries of theology, the most magnificent contribution to human thought ever known in this world. Meditative and learned and laborious thought—these have done their utmost with them, and still there are fresh depths to penetrate and new truths to unfold.

(3) And more striking than all is this evidently true in the mystery of His nature.

Take the Socinian hypothesis of that nature, and you are landed—as theologians again and again have asserted—and their assertions meet with no reasonable contradiction—you are landed in the perplexing paradox that the fairest Life ever lived, the most unique and marvellous, harmonious and all-embracing, Character ever known in history, the most living and effective Memory which has ever possessed the hearts of generations, the Mind Whose words are as powerful and fruitful to-day as the day when they were uttered,—that all these are the results of a life of—we tremble to use such words, yet used they must be—a life of either unfathomable pretence or unparalleled delusion.

More; of all lives, this Life of Christ, from all points of view, is the most complete embodiment of one principle—time and eternity. Violate a deep and serious principle, and there is something evidently wrong in the working out of your problem. Treat the nature of Jesus as other than the completed

expression of the meeting of time and eternity, and you have a *reductio ad absurdum*. The Unitarian mistake is not only a merely chilling intellectualism leaving whole forces of the human soul unsatisfied, and laying an icy arrest on the springs of Divine affections which otherwise would be energetic in the natures subdued by its baleful influence; it is a treason against sane reasoning. The Creed of Nicæa, in the light and depth of its mystery, has the further attraction—it is common sense.

VI.

Brethren, we are soaring into high thoughts, and the pressure of practical duties is upon us day by day. Lent is coming. The great fast, with all the poetry of a season consecrated by the habit and tradition of the Christian Church, cuts into our modern life with its peremptory demands, and its teaching and calling, at first sight so out of tune with modern life. "At first sight?" Yes; but not when we look further. Surely all real and fruitful effort in conduct, as well as growth in character, must depend upon the due invasion of eternity into the domains of time.

Here and now we do well to remember a very pressing danger.

In an age of progress, and progress of unparalleled

rapidity, the active life seems likely to rob the contemplative of much which ought to be its possession. There is plenty of religious activity. Is there as much of religion? Plenty of energy and work. Is there corresponding piety? Plenty of rank leafage. Is there deep strength of root in a strong soul to keep the tree firm before the coming storm? The real effective power of work is lost—worse than lost—if the inner forces are not kept fresh and strong. All right and well and necessary it is to work *for* God, but we must take care to be ourselves much *with* God. Have we not need, dear friends, to learn and remember and practise the truth that there is no work so dignified, so fruitful, so abiding, as the serious effort and activity of prayer? Few things are sadder than a fair dead body when the soul is gone. And it is possible, yes, all too painfully possible, to carry on the routine and decencies of a religion when the soul, the living soul, has fled.

Settle it in your minds, then, that there is nothing so needed in an age like ours as determined withdrawal of the soul from the clamour of the world and the work of life, into the secret presence-chamber, where we learn our own weakness, and gain experimental certainty of the strength of God. Settle it in your minds that what your prayers may want—from the pressing demands of business—what your prayers may want in length they must gain in intensity.

Settle it in your minds that you must work in time but the scope of your inward vision must be—indeed, it must be—eternity.

And my words shall not be all of warning. No; here we have a strong encouragement. What is this eternal principle, but a very birth-spring of hope? And what but hope is needed in a time of such accumulated influences which make for depression? And what treachery, what treason, can be more complete against our own high destiny and God's goodness, than the treachery of despondency or the treason of despair?

If "the Light of Life," if the example and teaching of our Master, taught anything, it taught, to those who desire to follow Him, the duty of hope.

Young life in its first enthusiasm has a dream of the ideal, touched too often with a melancholy more dramatic than real. It sings in truly unreal sadness—

"Oh! earlier shall the rosebuds blow
In those far years, those happier years;
And children weep, when we lie low,
Far fewer tears, far softer tears."

But experience, and Divine grace, and the "light of the Lord" in Christ come to its rescue, as it looks firmly upwards, and then the voice rises low and strong—

"Clouds sweep away, clear dawns instead
Break, and there breathes a fresher air;
Life comes when Death itself is dead,—
May I be there! may I be there!"

We are *bound* to remember the mysterious, the unimagined, the glorious future, on which Christ has thrown the radiance of His life and teaching; bound to connect it as a practical motive with this moment of the toil and sorrow of each of us; bound to remember that it may, that, if we will, it *must* be ours; bound to "look not at the things seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

VII.

It is just when we link high thoughts with common duties that we are most truly Christians. It is just when the soul learns some devotion to Him Who is the Meeting-point of time and eternity, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, our God and Brother—just when it strains the eye of longing and contemplative hope to the things of eternity, and then turns its hand to the rude and common duties of daily life, and the exercise of practical virtue, of purity, kindness, justice, considerateness, truth—that our work is done best, and our spiritual life grows most truly, and our probation is best fulfilled, and men are helped, and God is glorified, and we rise to the true dignity of our being, and are more like true

followers of the Crucified, and "walk in the Light of Life."

Ah! brethren, we must do common things with a simple heart and high intentions. We must step boldly through the night with our eyes on the morning. This is the life of faith; this is the foundation of a Christian character; this is following Jesus; this is guiding the path of our progress by "the Light of Life."

There is nothing, believe me, overstrained or unreal in trying to carry the vision of eternity constantly into the duties of daily life. For death is real, and the eternal world is a serious certainty, and each of us has but one life to live and one death to die, and the consequences of our actions—for the soul is one and indivisible and individual—dog our every step, and follow us most certainly across the grave. Great saints, of course, are there who have done this perfectly; but great saints—S. Paul, S. Francis, S. Hugh—are only high examples of a life, the principles of which are the same for us all. There is only one path for all towards growth as towards perfection, and that is the path in time illuminated by a temper of eternity, and tracked out for us all by Christ.

The waves of the vast Atlantic break upon the cliffs of south-western England; and, standing on the headlands in the wild autumn evenings, the ocean

before you looks a mere wild expanse of unsympathetic sea. Cross it; you find beyond are loving hearts and happy homes, and men who work and live and love as you do.

The waves of eternity beat upon the shores of time. Cold and cruel they seem to be, telling only of an engulfing grave. Cross them with the wings of a spirit buoyed up on heavenly hope and childlike confidence, and you find there is an eternal country, which, when you must be driven from this little scene of your life's struggle, will make you an eternal home.

A few more years; a few more struggles; a few more sorrows, toils, and tears; a few more efforts to do our duty; a few more acts of penitence for sin; a few more grey hairs; a few more scattered hopes, blown like the leaves of autumn before the gathering gale; a few more hours of prayer and days of labour, and stormy mornings of work or apprehension, and sunny evenings of love and peace;—and you and I will be gone—gone, with no trace behind us, except such as has been marked by our temper of eternity; gone, with the consequence of our short and troubled struggle following us, but bathed, as we trust, through the mercy of Him Who loves us—bathed in the precious Blood.

O Christ of pity, King of eternity, Man once suffering in time! give us grace, give us grace, by

Thine unending merit, to live as those have lived before us in view of an eternal destiny, with the spirit and purpose of Thy children born for the land where Thou livest, where sin and death are dead!

SERMON XII.

The Reward of Obedience.

“Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”—ACTS xxvi. 19.

A SENSE of eternity has been marked on the Christian mind by the teaching of Christ. It has run through the Church's life, and has moulded and marked the Christian character. Whether by keeping alive an unearthly consciousness of man's higher destiny, of God's supreme claims, of the reality of a future life, or of the unending significance of the moral Law, it has done much towards the creation of the temper of the Christian, and gone far towards constituting that unique thing, difficult to describe, easy to recognize—Christian character.

And yet our Blessed Master, in throwing the light of His life on mind and character and duty, had something more to teach than this. There have been tempers of the Church at some periods of her history, and certainly many instances of individual souls where a real belief in the unseen, a real *faith*,

existed; where a strong sense of the sanctity of the demand of the moral Law was not wanting; and yet where there was wanting the fulness and beauty of Christian tone and Christian character.

The light thrown had always been from Christ. Before the Incarnation, He, the Eternal Word, was still "the Light that lighteth every man;" but the light was dimmer at one time than another, and less completely absorbed by those on whom it fell. The strong monotheistic testimony of the ancient Church of Israel had in it, indeed, prophetic rays and hints of the true nature of God; but as long as it remained predominantly monotheistic, it remained in some measure hard. It remained for the fuller revelation to bring out God's nature and the conditions of His undying love. Men might grasp "eternal things" in the earlier Church, or the earlier stages of a Christian life; but the fuller light was "an Eternal Person," and where that had its full effect, there, indeed, was the possibility of completion of Christian character. Blessed, blessed they who should be "not disobedient to such a heavenly vision."

I.

Brethren, principles which affect character are more easily judged of as they are seen at work in

a personal life. S. Paul is a noble, a fruitful example of the power of the heavenly vision, and the reward of obedience to its teaching and demands in a human soul.

The scene suggested by the text is worth recalling. It was about A.D. 60, I suppose, and Paul lay a prisoner in the Prætorium of Cæsarea. Two years he had been there, suffering on the most vexatious and frivolous of charges. Felix had little doubt of his innocence; and his conscience, sin-stained and unheeded as it had been, had been aroused to painful activity by the Apostle's arguments on righteousness, on the duty of self-restraint, and on the certainty of coming judgment. But a habit of self-seeking worldliness had long asserted its sway over conscience, and, to curry favour with the Jewish fanatics, Felix had gone out of office, leaving Paul bound.

Festus had come. Paul had naturally declined his unfair proposal to be tried at Jerusalem, and had appealed to Rome. Festus may have been nettled at such rejection, but he was a man of sufficient capacity to be not blind to the high intellectual gifts and commanding character of the prisoner. Festus was at the moment in close relations with Agrippa. Agrippa and his sister Bernice had paid him court from the first moment of his arrival, prudently recognizing the advantage to themselves in keeping on good terms with the Roman authorities. In conver-

sation, Festus had mentioned the case of S. Paul. It had excited the interest of Agrippa, who had expressed a desire himself to hear the prisoner plead. It was an opportunity for Festus—an opportunity to hear the opinion of the Jew of distinction upon a question so perplexing to a Roman official as the law of heresy; an opportunity, also, for paying a compliment to his distinguished friends, and using Paul to “make a Roman holiday.”

The trial was in the Prætorian Palace. Very striking the scene must have been.

In the chair of state, and in the splendid hall, sat Festus, wearing the robes of office and representing the majesty of Rome. The hall was filled with soldiers; the procurator was attended by the officers of his guard and of the legions in their military accoutrements, and by the representatives of civic authority in their official robes.

Then came the Jewish sovereign and his sister with the fullest possible pageantry of state. They were young, and Bernice was beautiful with the personal beauty which seemed to belong to the race of the Herods, in striking contrast to their moral depravity. Nothing that could make the occasion splendid and impressive was wanting. And when all was ready the prisoner was called. Perhaps from no great height of stature, probably from some defect in eyesight, the Apostle's bodily presence was, so it had

been said, "weak." He was manacled and conducted between guards to the judgment-seat, and then the hearing began.

It was not long, however, before, whatever may have been wanting in impressiveness of appearance, was soon supplied by the felt force of the Apostle's intellect and character. Raising his chained hand, according to his manner of speaking, losing all oppressive sense of the merely external display around him, but losing none of that readiness and tact and fineness of feeling which ever marked him as a real "gentleman," the Apostle began his speech.

He spoke of his earlier life and convictions; of his unflinching opposition to the nascent Christian sect; of his treatment of Stephen; then of the light which flashed upon him, convincing him of his mistake and showing him the truth; and then of his after-action. "Whereupon," he said, as he related the turning-point in his career—"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

II.

Brethren, it was that vision, and his entire and prompt obedience to it, which crowned with what was wanting a very striking character. Let us examine

this. Look back for a moment on the earlier life of S. Paul.

We can have little doubt that heredity, with all that is comprised in it of mysterious power—that heredity, joined to the influences which by chance, by accident, or by providential guidance, as a religious man would say, are brought to bear on any life, especially in its earlier years, are the forces most powerful in moulding character. By heredity some men are helped, some men are “handicapped,” in the race of life. By influences original powers are doubtless developed or restrained; but, under all, there lies the mystery of the soul, the self able in the last resort to use or refuse much that may be likely to bear upon it with considerable power.

S. Paul, we know, was by birth a Jew of Jews; by some inherited privilege he was a Roman citizen, and he belonged, apparently, to a trading family. He felt, from the accident of his birth and early life in Cilicia, the refining and cultivating power of Greek influence; he felt, from the circumstance of his education at Jerusalem, in the lecture-room of Gamaliel, the force of Jewish devotion to religious questions, of Jewish manners and prejudices, and of Jewish unbending loyalty to national traditions of sorrow and hope.

From our first acquaintance with him, we find him keen and cultured, of dauntless courage, of strong Jewish opinion, of great religiousness of mind, and,

in all the questions which came before him, marked, more than any man that ever lived, except, perhaps, Dante, with intensity of character—a man for whom any serious matter which came before him possessed an absorbing interest; a man who threw himself with heart and soul into whatever he had to do. “That which thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,” was not only a wise advice which he could theoretically express to others, it was the practical habit of his life.

Then came the moment when he found himself in contact with the religion of Jesus Christ. He took part in the trial, the condemnation, the execution, of the first martyr. Paul was far too keen not to feel the force of Stephen’s words, all the more as he himself was an earnest and well-instructed student of Jewish history. But his prejudice was strong; “the veil was still upon his heart;” all the hopes of Israel, as he conceived them, would be wrecked if *this* heresy were to have its course; and so he was far too unflinching and consistent to fail in backing up the decree for Stephen’s martyrdom. With such a character, to do anything at all is to do it with unwavering completeness. He listened with attention, he joined in voting, he witnessed the cruel scene when the sharp, unsparing stones crushed the soul out of the young deacon, and he even took a prominent part in the carrying out of the execution. But men

of strong will may succeed in being, as they think, logically consistent, when all the time there are misgivings of soul within, as to the true value of these conclusions as a guide in life. Conclusion is one thing, conviction is quite another. The foundations of Paul's convictions had at least had a severe shock, and in his heart and conscience, although he steadily and determinedly persevered in resisting them, Stephen's words were like the sharp "goads" used to quicken the pace of unwilling cattle, against which to kick was pain.

III.

Then came the crisis in the life of the Apostle. He was not the man to shrink from the consequences of his own deliberate act. If he had persecuted Stephen, there were others who followed Stephen who must also be persecuted. If truth demanded in its behalf such a weapon as persecution, then no tender feelings as to age or sex should be allowed to prevail. Paul journeyed to Damascus. Strange and terrible in his mind must have been the conflict on that memorable journey. Probability and tradition have united in fixing upon the point in the Roman road where the Apostle saw his vision. He saw Jesus Christ. He saw Him so clearly that he was able, in after-days, to

treat that vision as a matter of literal and sensible experience, quite as actual as the experience of other Apostles who had lived in familiar intercourse with their Master during His earthly life. He had loved truth. He had longed for goodness. He had been intensely earnest in the conduct which his loyalty to truth and goodness seemed to him to demand. He had fulfilled that primary condition of spiritual progress; he had not played fast and loose with his own conscience. Blessed are they who in this have followed his example; to such, sooner or later, light comes. The light came to Paul—the “Light of Life.” “The Light that lighteth every man,” raised to its highest power and clearest illuminative brilliance. He saw perfect goodness, perfect moral beauty, perfect human tenderness, perfect Divine love; and saw that on him—on *him*, Paul the persecutor—was concentrated the care, the Divine affection, of Jesus Christ. It was a tremendous vision. It was a tremendous moment. It was a claim, sharp and exacting, made by the Creator on the will and the loyalty of His creatures. Happy, thrice happy, it was for the Apostle that he was able to say, in the face of the wondering court at Cæsarea, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

Brethren, we do well to remember that he might have disobeyed. Grace never compels. Will is always free. It was quite possible that if Paul’s conscience

had not been so carefully kept, if his sense of truth and reality had not been so strong, that he might have persuaded himself that spiritual facts are not facts—as we see men persuade themselves every day—that he might have cajoled himself into the persuasion that he was in reality a dupe to his imagination, or to overwrought physical feeling. No; he had been true to himself from the first, and now, when the light came, “he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

There was much, indeed, calculated to turn the balance against obedience. He, like all men, especially like Pharisees of the time, could not have been free from religious prejudice. Prejudice is a condition of mind resulting from established habits of thought and modes of feeling, unexamined by scrutinizing and critical reason. Every prejudice based upon the most religious part of his being would be in opposition to the rising religion. The very strength of his nature would give force to his prejudice, and arouse it and arm it against submission to Christ.

He must have been helped in the same direction by the public opinion of his time. In proportion as a man is a man of earnestness and activity of thought, in proportion also as he is the possessor of a sympathetic nature, he will share in and be influenced by the main currents of thought which sweep through the minds of his contemporaries; for

better, for worse, he will be affected by public opinion. And public opinion, when it belongs to a class, and especially to a zealous religious combination, is more than usually powerful, because it is concentrated. Public opinion—and that he well knew—would be bitterly hostile to Christ. And every possible impulse of personal predilection and private interest would be in the same direction. It could not be pleasant to pass from the position of a rising leader in the most powerful and learned party of his day to that of the last and mistrusted recruit in the ranks of a sect hated and despised, and composed chiefly of the ignorant and socially insignificant.

These, brethren, are fearful forces. The lives of good men have before now been wrecked by them. Against all of them Paul was proof. He was proof because of his long-formed habit of sincere straightforwardness, of disinterested desire to do his duty; because of that moral elevation of character which enables a man to rise and stand a head and shoulders above the maxims and the clamour of worldly motives and worldly forces; and—because of the grace of God. He made his choice—a choice involving, as he must have known, a life of labour and suffering. He was “not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

There are few things harder than for a man of eager and earnest character deliberately to go back upon long-cherished convictions, and to own himself,

to himself and to a cynical and unsympathetic world, to have been wrong. It needs strength for a man to do it; it needs God's grace, and the simple heart which is ready to use it. "Except ye be converted," said the Lord, "and become as little children, ye cannot enter in." Many a man has gone long lengths in the direction of truth and duty, and has shrunk baffled and scared from a full submission to the Will of God. Paul all along had been *in earnest*; all along to do God's Will had been his desire. When the decisive moment came to follow the Light of Life which streamed upon him, he was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

IV.

The difference was marked and immediate.

It showed itself in his work. The work of any man, on whatever material he has to exercise himself, is in fact the expression of his character. It was not that there was greater diligence; his diligence *was* unflagging, but so it had been before. His intensity and vigour made that certain; but it showed itself in an evidently keener sense of spiritual proportion. Perspective is often wanting in spiritual vision, and the sense of proportion is marred or destroyed. Benozzo Gozzali, in the window adornments of the Ricasoli Palace, realized, as great masters had never before,

the full power of perspective, and in doing so gained keenness to his sense of proportion. Time, a narrow national aspiration, slavish fulfilment of a preparatory law, a hard and rigorous monotheism, had widened out suddenly before Paul's astonished gaze into the wide horizons of eternity, and the tender and glorious landscapes of the kingdom of God. Great thoughts henceforth led him necessarily to the careful fulfilment of small duties. If he soars into the seventh heaven henceforth, it is to bring down the energy and love and considerate sympathy by which to help the runaway slave; to send kindly messages of reproof or affection to the pious ladies of Rome or Philippi; to open the treasures of his sympathetic tenderness to his young men converts, his "own sons;" to arrange for the offertories in Macedonia and Corinth; to think of the most modest dress for Christian women attending the Eucharist; to manage the progress of his trade of tent-making so that he might honestly pay his way. Half the thoughts of men are out of proportion. Big measures and great questions are apt to seem to them the whole of life. "Obedience to a heavenly vision" means, surely, my friends, it means the habit of high thinking with scrupulous loyalty to small duties.

The change *showed* itself in his work; it *was* in his character. Still there was the beautiful foundation long laid in his nature and his conscientious life; still he could scarcely help being sincere, possessing delicacy

of tact, being in the widest sense strongly and sweetly true. But his sympathies were enlarged; he was to an unparalleled degree identified with human nature. He could say as few could, "*Nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*" What was human, since he had known the Divine and human Christ, was near and dear to Paul. There is sometimes a danger in sympathetic characters of some flaw of weakness, Not a touch of weakness in him. Strong, unflinching, unswerving, decided. He knew his own mind, and he acted accordingly. Probably never, except in his Divine Master, was there such a combination of tenderness and strength.

Think of his woman-like tenderness towards Timothy! Think of his lion-like strength in the face of Galatian treason to Christ! Certainly in his nature there was a very wonderful combination of qualities; but here they are reinforced, chastened, extended, when once he has impressed upon his soul the personality of Christ, when once he is "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

V.

From the writings of S. Paul we gather that two ideas had come prominently before his mind, and were borne in upon his soul, since his conversion,

with astonishing sharpness and force. The one was *the idea of sin*. Always the great Apostle had been a man of keen moral perception. He had studied, indeed, to much effect the moral Law. But until he realized "the heavenly vision," and entered into the mystery of the Cross of Christ, there was little of that sensitive consciousness of sin which is one measure of spiritual attainment in a serious Christian soul. Sin in its intrinsic dreadfulness; sin in its subtle approaches; sin in its essential contradiction to the Divine nature; sin in its mysterious power, to slacken which in human souls required nothing less than the sacrifice of the Son of God; sin in its awful chemical force for corrupting character; sin in the horror of its possible triumph, in the glory of its possible defeat; sin in its power to beget its train of weird and hideous children—pain and sorrow, moral misery and the wretchedness of death; sin in itself and in its consequences; sin in the mysterious secrecy of its beginning, in the awful vision of doom revealed as its close;—these things, from the vision on the Damascus wayside, bit deep into the heart of Paul.

And along with these a glorious hope, a glorious revelation—the revelation of *the love of God*. We who have heard the phrase, at least, so often, whether or not we have realized the fact, can hardly, I suppose, imagine the joyful vividness with which that revelation broke upon the mind of Paul. The love of God,

in its depth, its unmeasured greatness, its tenderness, its minute considerate sympathy, its personal application, its unflinching loyalty, its unflinching patience, its abounding resources, its wide-sweeping comprehensiveness, and above all in this fact, that it was made known, possible to realize, possible to embrace, tenderly human although so exaltedly Divine, in the life, the character, the death, the sacrifice, the intercession, and the reign in glory, of Jesus Christ. To be loved, tenderly loved, suffered for and delivered, — this brought home to Paul the awfulness of the enemy from whence deliverance had been necessary even at such a price, and the dearness, and goodness, and kindness, and mercy of Him Who “spared not His own Son,” when that sacrifice was necessary, but “freely gave Him for us all.”

The old faith in the unseen was there in Paul as before, only stronger than ever; the stern, strong sense of moral obligation, of obedience to conscience, of obedience to Law,—that too had enlarged, not failed. But now there was more; there was a heavenliness of character indefinable in its strength and sweetness, but which is felt in every line of his writings—the enlargement of a soul into a nearer likeness to his Redeemer, which is the reward of faithful submission, the consequence, the blessed consequence, of entire obedience to the heavenly vision.

VI.

Brethren, such a character is awful, is beautiful in its sublimity, in its elevation!

Yet just such must we follow—follow, it may be, in our poor and miserable measure, but follow in the main lines of its progress, with a certainty, if so by grace we do, of the same kind of reward.

For us it is also true that there must be a care and honesty in dealing with conscience. Remembering the doubles and twists into which our large faculty of self-seeking and treacherous cajoling of our own hearts may lead us, we must strive and pray earnestly to be *true*. “Lord, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts: and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.”

We, too, must keep alive—by prayer and Sacraments and deep faith, living faith in an unseen world—a sense, a keen sense, of our individual nearness and responsibility to God. We, too, must strive, amidst the cross-paths and bewildering byways of our moral probation—must strive to be firm and faithful to the moral Law; but even if so there will be something wanting. Christians of such a build *are* religious characters, and they have their place and their work to do; but they are apt to be narrow, and they are apt to be hard. In a selfish, self-conscious, subjective

nature like our own, such characters abound in the religious world. They are good and upright, but they fail in sweetness, in sympathy, and, in the long-run, in strength. There needs an eye turned upwards to watch for the Lord Jesus. He has more to show us, more to teach. His Voice is in the rising wind; the music of His accents sounds over the restless sea; Nature speaks of Him—much more man. He is “found of them who sought Him not.” He is near us in daily duties, in small self-denials, in tiny self-conquests; near us in the sorrows of the poor, the miseries of the heart-heavy, the trials of the perplexed. He is near us in the work and way of life, and among the creatures of His love—*our* fellow-creatures; near us, too, in secret whispers and sudden visions. We find Him in the page of an amusing book, in the quiet joys of an innocent home life, in the fair face of our children, in the warm grasp of our dear friends, in the sweetness of home peace, in the sweetness of kindly affection, in the sweetness of the love of woman, in the sternness of determined duty, in the hour of deep thought, in the suggestive splendour of noble pictures, in the heart-piercing wordless language of mysterious music, in the tenderness of the dying evening, in the pathetic splendour of the dawn. “Jesus only, always, everywhere,” if the eye is open! Oh! let us keep the open eye; oh! let us keep the listening ear. Then His heavenliness creeps over our spirit, as the evening

light over the crags of the Wetterhorn, harmonizing, softening, after a day of storm. Then strength shall not fail, but tenderness indeed shall be deepening; the reward, the blessed reward of growth in His image and likeness, shall not be wanting to us, if only, if only by His grace, in the great moment of decisive choice, we are resolved that we will "not be disobedient to the heavenly vision."

VII.

Brethren, "the heavenly vision" may bring light to us in many and various ways. It may show us higher views of life, of its uses, its seriousness, its responsibility; it may clear before our minds' eye truer meaning of self-denial, long-suffering, patience; it may make evident to us the need of some change of aim or habit, some modification of accepted custom and way in our life; it may teach us to feel the possibility of higher, more earnest efforts for doing good to others. Two things it is sure to do—to show us something more of the meaning of sin, and of the real, tender, personal love of God; and of the value of our own, even our own tiny effort and place in conquering the one, in advancing and rejoicing in the other.

Ah! then, what we must strive for is an honest

habit to be serious and true and thorough. Ah! what we must pray for is constant supplies of God's sustaining and assisting grace, that whenever He flashes His light upon us in quiet ways, or by some more startling visitation, always with simple hearts we may be ready, and may be "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

VIII.

Let us then, brethren, let us remember, better than words we speak, better than wealth we may expend, better than acts we do, is the power of Christian character in advancing the kingdom of goodness, the kingdom of Christ.

Men measure things in the world by fallacious measures. Sometimes we are valued by what we *have*. Possessions, in a sense, are powers; they are the subject-matter of serious responsibility, whether they be possessions of brain, or heart, or what is called "position." Possessions, however, are not the measure of our value with God; no, nor of our final usefulness.

Men measure us sometimes by what we *do*. This is a just measurement up to a certain point. But good things may be done, and even a certain amount of usefulness achieved, by the acts which form mile-

stones in our external life. These are not all, these are not the truest measurements of value.

Remember, oh ! remember, ultimately we are of value, not by what we *have*, no, nor even by what we *do*, but by what, through the grace of Christ—by what we *are*.

Christian character is the final expression of Christ in us, and that is “our Hope of glory.” The reality, the earnestness, the large-heartedness, the purity, the kindness, the strength of our Blessed Master,—these must be reproduced in us ; and for this almost all may be said to depend upon whether or not we are “obedient to the heavenly vision.”

Life goes. A few more passing years, a few more joys, a few more bitter tears, a few more weary struggles, a few more innocent pleasures, a few more bright and happy days, a few more dark nights of perplexity and disaster, a few more eager passionate loves, a few more trying partings, a few more submissions to Divine command, a few more exercises in our short day’s probation, and all will be over ! Life is dark ; the night gathers round us. Oh ! let us pray and strive in deep penitence, in earnest effort, in faithful obedience, in quiet unswerving duty,—oh ! let us pray and strive to walk in “the Light of Life ;” a light which will deepen and broaden, and gather in all rays of sunset sadness, and absorb all the dawn

upon the mountains, till it burst into the full flood of day, when night is banished—into the splendour, the searching, peaceful splendour, of the everlasting morning, when “sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

SERMON XIII.

The Light of the Cross.

“ God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord.”—
GAL. vi. 14.

THE Fifth Sunday in Lent, dear friends, is a kind of landmark. It marks a point in our ecclesiastical and, I hope, in our religious progress as we advance through the Church's penitential teaching. The tradition of the Christian Church has marked it as Passion Sunday. We begin—that is the saying of the great teachers of the Church of England—we begin, as the Jews began fourteen days before their Passover—we begin fourteen days before the great festival of the Christian year, to remember, before we enter into the details of the Holy Week—to remember what I may call the principles or the philosophy of the Passion.

Dear friends, there is no fact in human history comparable to the Passion of the Lord. If it be true—because it *is* true—that the Almighty came down to suffer and to die, then there is no subject that should

attract and enchain human attention so much as the suffering and the death of the Eternal. And so it is that on Passion Sunday, if we are religious people, if we are serious Christians, we may well, under the guidance of the Bible and the Church, remember the philosophy of the Passion.

Now, can we follow a better guide, I want to ask you, can we go under the guidance of a hand stronger in its pointing, or a mind clearer in its thinking, than the mind and the hand of S. Paul? And is it possible to find S. Paul's thoughts about the Passion of our most dear Master more clearly, more tersely, more vigorously stated than they are stated in the text—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord"?

My friends, you are quite aware, I doubt not, without my telling you, that the English words in which S. Paul's meaning is expressed are really stronger than the corresponding Greek expression which was literally his own; but, although that is the case, our English Bible practically expresses what was in the mind of the great Apostle, and so we need not fear to follow its guidance.

S. Paul, then, remember first, is speaking in the language of symbolism. S. Paul, of all men, knew what he was about. The man who was so practical, that with his high thoughts running up into the things of eternity, could come down quite naturally

to tell the Philippian ladies how they ought better, as one might say, to do their district visiting and keep their tempers; the man who, with his whole soul aflame at the thought of self-sacrifice and goodness, could speak about the details of worship, about the organization of the Sacraments, about the head-dress of ladies when they went to church, about the condition of one poor lonely slave when he himself was a manacled prisoner, perhaps in the cave by the Capitol; the man who, when he had preached to his thousands, or confronted the tribunals of his country—never fearing, in his dauntless courage, the voice of public opinion—could go back and sit down to sew at his tents, with his bleared eyes watching, if I may so say, the progress of the needle, that he might pay his way;—that man, you may be quite sure, whenever he writes on a serious subject, is a safe guide. He knew what he was about. He was no dreamer; he was a practical man.

And S. Paul, when he wrote to the Galatian people, knew just this—he knew he was writing to an impulsive, to an enthusiastic, to an excitable people; he knew, therefore, that at least they would understand the language of symbolism, and so he spoke in symbol.

Now, a symbol, dear friends, means this—it is a handy expression, either in short words or in some evident and striking sign, of a far-extending truth. It appeals swiftly and clearly, I submit—it appeals

swiftly and clearly—to the ear or to the eye; and S. Paul, breaking out in his noble enthusiasm, and then subduing that enthusiasm with his strong self-restraint, felt that those selfish Galatians, those people who could feel so quickly and feel so sharply, were sure to be touched by the language of symbolism. He did not argue out the question, as you and I would argue it; but he simply stated, when they were running wild to new views, to new ideals, the old Gospel in a picturesque symbol. “God forbid that I should glory—doubtless you can understand that—God forbid that I should glory, save in that rich and fruitful and passion-kindling symbol—save in the Cross of the Lord.”

Dear friends, we are not Galatians. We are, thank God, of that strong Teutonic race whose temper leads them to take to pieces, to dissect, to weigh, to value, the various departments of any great thought; and therefore I ask you, on Passion Sunday, don't merely gaze as Celtic people might gaze on the *symbol* of “the Cross,” but ask yourselves the practical purpose which ought to be before you—how to keep the Passion-tide. And for this end let us examine the Apostle's thought. What did S. Paul mean by the Cross?

I.

Well, first of all, there can be no question about this. S. Paul, when he spoke of the Cross, saw before him the vision of a splendid and a fruitful Life, crowned by a tragic end. He knew the history of Jesus of Nazareth. He remembered, as we can remember if we read the Gospels, that it was the history of a young Man Who began in His boyhood very much in the way that we begin if we have the great privilege early in life of being wakened up to religion—began with sincere piety. The Boy Who went to the Temple and felt the power and force of religion in His Father's house, Who felt it so strongly that He left His earthly parents in the crowd, Who accordingly had to be sought, had to make an explanation; the Boy Who, with these early religious impressions, passed many years apparently as a carpenter's apprentice in the quiet home in the lovely seclusion of Nazareth, under the mountains near to the sea; the Boy Who then passed from home in early manhood, like many young men Who have been wakened up to higher thoughts—passed to the wilderness to think over higher things; Who felt the force of temptation; felt it and fought it fully out, and then came back from that strife strong for work and with a sense of "mission:"—young man—I say in parenthesis—if I

speak to any who is fighting temptation, remember it, when He fought His temptations they were paths to a practical work; Who came back after His great victory, realizing manfully His calling and duty, and felt that He must help His fellow-men; Who went out in the strength of that great realization to work a most extraordinary work; Who moved His countrymen; Who charmed those who appeared quite outside the power of moral charming; Who gathered round Him the poor, and lowly, and despised, and forsaken; Who, by His very aspect and gaze and voice, made the covetous, avaricious Matthew pitch over his money-tables and strive for better things; Who brought the lost Magdalene to her knees in an agony of desperate and delighted prayer; Who preached a great mission full of joy, full of enthusiasm, full of success; and then to Whom there came ever-increasing sorrows; Whose dear friend, personal acquaintance, admiring relation, was beheaded—beheaded under circumstances of heartless cruelty; Whose life grew darker with clouds of difficulty and danger, but Whose soul became no darker, but “shining more and more unto the perfect day;” Who put His foot down more firmly like a strong man, feeling the insistence of circumstances and the oppression of sorrow; Who, realizing more acutely the trials of His own daily life, worked the harder; Who marched to the capital with such a stately pace and such a majestic

gait that the men who knew Him best were astonished and amazed; Who then went to face the authorities who could not understand Him—worldly men who were unable to enter into His higher thoughts, conventional religionists who had no true conception of a higher life; Who faced them quietly, with unswerving consistency, and Who, as a consequence of all His goodness, was condemned; Who died—died a death of deepest sorrow—died in a tragedy of blood. Such a One had done one thing at least—He had done His duty; He had witnessed to truth.

This would be accepted by Unitarianism,¹ and this is one side of the Catholic Faith; for it teaches us to believe in the perfect Man—that His development was according to the laws of spiritual progress. “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” S. Paul felt it, and we must feel it. And when S. Paul felt that perfected, steady human development in the Lord’s life, he was stirred with enthusiastic devotion, and thus you can understand how he would say to those impulsive and changeable Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord.”

What S. Paul meant by the “Cross,” then, was the image and handy summary of a great and splendid Life.

¹ Our Lord’s career is so sketched somewhere, I can’t remember where, beautifully by Dr. Martineau.

II.

Go one step further. I take it that S. Paul, when he looked at the "Cross," realized that in that Life there was a solemn *undertone*.

Have you ever heard the undertone of the Atlantic, as the rushing billows break on the cliffs of Cornwall, or roar around you in a travelling ship? heard it in the quiet night, when the waves are surging, when the storm is coming? Have you ever looked at the pictures of Rembrandt? Have you ever seen that weird darkness, that mysterious light, and felt the undertone? Have you ever listened to the music of Mendelssohn, and felt as though you heard the spring birds singing, as though there came before you the voices of innocent children, and the kindly faces of dear friends, or felt the breezes of a summer morning, or watched the unfolding of early flowers? This was the mystery of the undertone.

My brothers and sisters, I believe there is nothing quite so serious or so penetrating as the undertone of life.

S. Paul felt that, under that human life of progressive development in the Lord Jesus, there was one undertone. What was that? Self-sacrifice. Measure the power of that expression, and then I think you will understand with me how justly the strong

practical Apostle should say to himself, and say to us, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord."

III.

What did S. Paul mean by the Cross? He meant a Life, He meant the undertone of that Life. He meant something more. Well, he meant a great power. I think that S. Paul had his mind saturated—if I read his Epistles aright—by at least three clear thoughts.

First—bear with me if I speak of a very serious and dark thought—his mind was saturated with the thought of sin.

Sin! Some people speak as though sin means shortened goodness; and others as though it were merely a stop in the progress or development of the human family; and others that it is opposition to the general opinion of mankind. Now, the opinion of mankind is a very serious and important thing; but remember general opinion may at times go very far wrong indeed, and of this certainly we have had examples in history where even law—which usually embodies men's best opinions,—contradicts the highest teaching of morality, and acts, in fact, as if it were a candidate for damnation. Then there are others that treat sin as if, after all, it were a mere passing mistake.

Well, we know that every man and woman has a conscience, and we know that every conscience says, some time or other, with emphatic determination, with the force of the vote of the majority, that sin is nothing of the kind. Sin, as S. Paul saw it, is simply this—it is the will of the creature in contradiction to the will of the Creator. And therefore because—bear with me if I philosophize—because the will of the Creator is the necessary law of the whole universe, and therefore of this world in which we are living, sin is the breaking up of the right order of things. Sin is moral confusion. Sin has been compared by a great teacher to some planet breaking away from the law of attraction, and travelling on at will, carrying devastation, carrying burning, carrying death.¹ Let me persuade you of this, if of nothing else—that when a created will determinedly, thoughtfully, attentively, breaks with and contradicts the law of the Creator, then the consequences are of incalculable awfulness. Now, S. Paul felt *that*. Read the Epistle to the Romans, read the impression made upon him, when he came as a prisoner, by the social condition of the imperial capital. Then, at least, you will know what S. Paul felt of sin. Sin is not a mere passing phase of thought. Sin is not like a lightning-flash, which fades away. Sin has consequences.

Young man, don't you know that when you have

¹ Dr. Liddon.

sinned you have been reluctantly conscious of some of these consequences? Has there not been, after your night of debauchery, a morning of misery? Has there not been, after your day of treachery to high principles, dark thoughts not pleasant to face? Certainly sin has consequences. So S. Paul felt; so it is. And, for us all, this is the question—What is to be done? How *can* this fact be faced? And it is a fact; for, do what you will and say what you please, sin is still a fact in human life. How is it to be faced?

Stop for a moment. S. Paul did not only realize sin; he realized this—that Almighty God, because He is God, and because we cannot be independent of the Being from Whom we come, to Whom we go,—that Almighty God, by the very necessity of His Being, cannot neglect sin. But S. Paul realized also that God loved the sinner—the Father loved the child who had gone wrong. The Father desired to help that very will which He had placed in position, and which had gone so far astray. The Unitarian teaching tells you to follow an example; the Catholic Faith tells you to lean on a Saviour. Out of the depth of the heart of your Father there came the Eternal Son, saying, “Yes, yes, there is sin; but they are tempted. Yes, they are tempted; but there are great powers about them. Oh, how strong they are in their humanity! Oh, what possibility of performance! Oh, what a glorious future may be theirs!

Shall I not help them to understand how great life is, even in the trial of their probation? Shall I not humble Myself to save them from their sins?" And so He came—He came to meet the sin of the creature; to meet, to conquer it. He came to act out perfect obedience; He came to fulfil the Law of righteousness; He came, and He only said, "Cling to Me, as a Brother. Hold fast by Me, as the Leader of an army. Let repentance and faith do their duty. Thus let thy hand grasp My Hand; and though your sin and your temptation be dreadful, I will fulfil *for* you, and then I will fulfil *in* you, the duty of a perfect humanity. I will atone for and cleanse your sin."

Ah! you who are in earnest, can you wonder at S. Paul when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord"?

I have felt the power of the hurricane in the Atlantic; I have felt the power of the sudden storms on the Mediterranean shores; I have watched the mechanical force by which they pump a hundred thousand gallons of water from a great lake for the use of a great city; I have been moved by the force of Rembrandt, been awed by the insight and earnestness of Dante, trembled at the heart-piercing music of Spohr; but I have never known, and I don't think you can ever know, a power comparable to that which can cleanse our sins and make us better—

the power of the precious Blood. Sin can be blotted out, men can be raised to be men indeed, by the thought, by the teaching, by the life, by the death, by the strength, of the Lord Jesus.

May I not invite you to follow the Apostle, and say from your hearts, "God forbid that I should glory"—in my own life, in my weary days, in my weakening health, in my distracting anxieties, in my failing heart, in my failing prosperity, in my distress, in my joy, my work, my sorrow—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord"?

IV.

Certainly, I think, S. Paul meant a great Life and a great Power; and then you will bear with me—will you not?—if I say this: S. Paul meant that the whole was capable of a personal application.

Does it really matter to you and me, my friends, that there is a great power in philosophy if it never touches us? S. Paul meant a personal application. He had been a very enthusiastic and earnest public man. He had joined in the arguments against the sect of the Nazarenes, which had excited the intellect of Jerusalem. He had joined, there is no doubt, in the murder of S. Stephen; he had given his vote, and he had held the clothes of the murderers. We know it, for there is his own testimony, that he had

been riveted by the face of S. Stephen. And then he went, like a good, solid, practical man, to carry to their logical conclusions the principles he had endorsed; and on the wayside there came a vision—a vision of goodness, the vision of Jesus Christ; and S. Paul came to the conclusion that the Lord of all, the Lord of life, the Eternal Word, the Brightest and the Best, cared for *him*. What did it matter to S. Paul, what does it matter to you, whether the doctrines about Jesus Christ have a wide extension, if they don't touch *your* heart? You have your own sorrows; you have your own difficulties; you have your own affections; you have your own temptations; none can enter into them, my brothers and sisters, fully but you. But S. Paul felt, with the power of a great revelation, that the Lord of life did understand them, did feel for them, had not disregarded him, and had cared to conquer him; and so he submitted, and became the slave of Jesus Christ. Won't you?

It is quite as true—I speak the words of serious sense—it is quite as true for us as it was for S. Paul. He wishes to help you, and He does. He does desire to conquer you; to make you disciples of goodness; to make you live by high principles; to make you serious and devoted and determined; to make you self-sacrificing and sincere. Yes, S. Paul—it is an historical fact—S. Paul meant a tremendous power;

but S. Paul, I think, meant—and we may mean—a power capable of application when he said, in a loyal affectionateness, what we may learn, in some sense, to say from our hearts, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord.”

V.

And here a difficulty presents itself. Serious and thoughtful Englishmen may say—Is it possible, quite really, quite certainly possible—and reality, thank God, is *the* gift of Englishmen—is it quite really and quite certainly possible to appropriate the words of S. Paul?

I know that enthusiastic religionists use words often, alas! without meaning them; and it is most disastrous. It is disastrous, as it has been well said, to allow your words to go beyond your feelings; to allow your feelings—the great powers God has given for recognizing the beauty of truth—to go beyond your convictions; disastrous to allow your convictions to fail of some approximate representation in the acts, in the struggle of common life. Don't go off in a mere explosion of fiery and enthusiastic feeling, and say that you “glory in the Cross” when you do nothing of the kind. But, dear friends, we must be warned against unreality, and that silly pretentious

display which is made sometimes of unreal religion—a display where pomposity takes the place of reverence, and a pose does duty for fact—though we must be on our guard against this—still, still the Apostle's phrase has a meaning in it. It has a meaning, surely, for us. Let me explain. Ask for a moment—What is man?

Stand on the heights of Bethlehem with the prophet shepherd-boy, full of human power, full of high thoughts, capable afterwards of falling into deadly sin and of rising into greater penitence. What is man?

Man is an animal, with a body, with sensations, who eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and wakes, and extends his race; and, like other animals, he submits at last to the swift chemistry of the grave.

Go a step further. Man is a spirit. You have felt the brightness of the morning, have you not? You have felt the tenderness of the dying day; you have known the exhilaration of poetry; you have thrilled to the mystic power of music; you have known the greatness and the tenderness of the love of woman; you have known the sweetness and satisfaction of the beauty of childhood; you have had high thoughts, far beyond your lower nature. Man is a spirit.

Yes; but your love of woman has been degraded; your love of the bright morning has been shadowed

by darkening clouds; you have felt yourself below your opportunity, your accomplishment short of your desires. Man is a fallen spirit. Oh, nature, with passions capable of being purified and fired with Divine love! Oh, that spiritual nature, capable of looking up to the highest heavens, and rejoicing in the brightness of distant visions, where new suns rise in glory, and new stars come! Oh, that fallen nature, capable of untold depths of moral ruin, what can bring harmony back?

Nothing will improve that composite nature but the goodness and the greatness of One Who is God Almighty; and of One Who can quite sympathize with every trial and temptation to which our complex nature is subject; and of One Who, rising above the highest, can stand by the side of the lowest. None can sympathize fully but He Who the Catholic Faith tells is "about your path and about your bed;" Who loves you with eternal love; Who gathered you into His arms in Baptism; Who witnessed in your soul when you turned to better things; Who spread His hands upon you in Confirmation; Who feeds you at the Altar with His Body and His Blood. None—oh! none—can embrace the whole circumference of your being, and then penetrate into the secrets of your daily temptation, but Christ, the Lord Jesus, in His greatness of humanity, in the power of His Godhead, in the sorrows of His Cross. And therefore for

the common people in London, and therefore for the clergy, and therefore for the laymen, and therefore for those placed in high positions, and therefore for those who have to sweep the streets, is it not true? S. Paul is not too high-flown. We all, all need Christ. "God forbid that *we* should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord."

VI.

Remember, then, this, that as S. Paul teaches self-sacrifice as the undertone of the Cross, so in our common life it must be the same. Read the last chapter of Tacitus' "Agricola." Read the story of S. Augustine. In the first you will notice the desponding, nay, the quiet despair, of that great historian as he watched, so to speak, the remains of his father-in-law carried to the grave. In the second you will notice how the future saint—still seeking light—walked by the shore of the sea and watched the waves; how he said to the wild waves, in his eager longing, "Are ye my God?" and they seemed to say, "Seek above us;" how he listened to the winter winds, and said, "Are ye my God?" and they said, "Seek above us;" how he looked up to the eternal stars, and said, "Are ye my God?" and they said, "Seek above us;" and then how he lay down in the garden with his friend, and there came a voice which said, "Take up and read;" and how he opened the

Testament, and saw the revelation, and he changed the purpose of a life. And then there came the end of that Apostolic life, when the Vandals beat at the gate of his city, and he lay quietly in his bed, saying the fifty-first psalm, in confidence that God would save His Church.

Contrast S. Augustine with Tacitus, and then you know that the power of comfort coming from confidence in God is a spirit of self-surrender, of self-sacrifice which comes to us when once we have embraced the Cross of Christ.

VII.

So we may have on Passion Sunday some good thoughts, some practical thoughts, about our most Holy Master. We may remember that our social, personal life can never go on, with its dignity and self-restraint, without the power, without some grasp of the principles, which governed the Passion of our Lord?

You will ask me, then—How can I glory in the Cross?

(1) Try to follow the example of Christ. You say, "That is difficult." Is it?

Once, only once, but certainly once, there was a perfect Man. In serious words it has been said, "He

left a life, not only to admire, but to imitate." You may. Many men have feared they could not imitate Christ under the altered conditions of modern life. You can. Christ never laid stress—I quote again in substance from a great teacher—upon what we lay stress; He did not lay stress upon rank, or fortune, or place, or dignity, or genius. But He did lay stress upon a true heart, upon deep humility, upon sincere penitence, and I may gather up the words that I have said in one phrase—He laid stress upon reality of character.

If you try to be real, if you try to conquer your passions, if you try to be a *good* man, remember that science is great, that wisdom is great, but that there is one thing that is greater than all—goodness. You may follow the example of Christ.

Ah! that I could persuade you, in the simple conditions of your daily life, so to "glory in the Cross of the Lord"! Follow the example of Christ, then. What! can't you keep your temper better? Can't you do your work more earnestly? Can't you get up in the morning more determinedly at the right hour? Can't you say your prayers more seriously? Can't you try, not merely to enjoy *yourselves*, but to make other people happy? Can't you be a good father that guides and restrains his children, but does not provoke them to wrath? Can't you be the good lover that above all things respects womanhood?

Can't you be the good friend that will never desert or be disloyal from base self-interest? Can't you be that, and more that I need not dwell upon now? Then you follow the example of Christ.

You can follow it in the drawing-room; you can follow it in the pulpit; you can follow it in the Parliament House; you can follow it in the street; you can follow it where you please, if you are a *true* man and keep your eye on eternity.

Here and now, as Passion Sunday comes to you, say to yourselves, at least in the power of that example, "Henceforth from to-day, in my joys, in my sorrows, in my pleasures, in my depressing moments, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord.'" Follow the example of Christ.

(2) There spreads before me a large horizon as I speak these words. I remember, when we lay under cover of the headlands of Samos, the night was dark, and the storm had been gathering; but as the morning began to come, the storm died down, and the waves became calm with Ægean smoothness. And we watched—I and another—we watched across the mountains of Asia the breaking of the dawn. First there came a shaft of crimson, shot apparently from an unseen hand; then another, then another. Gradually the sky was amber; then the peaks of the mountains were illuminated with light of indescribable colours;

then the light crept slowly down the mountains, and then we laughed with gladness as it spread across the waves. "This," we thought, "this is like the saying of Scripture—'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"

My friends, the light of the life of Christ, the beauty of self-sacrifice, the greatness, the self-devotion, the determination of principle, the sincerity of endeavour, the true elevation of character—of character which will not be dragged down to what is base,—these are lights from the eternal country; and if now you try to be *good* men or *good* women, self-denying, sincere, determined, energetic, in a power, not of yourselves, but which is placed at your disposal, then in you "the path of the just is a shining light," and it will shine "more and more unto the perfect day."

A good man is a great power, and a good man is a representative of the Cross. Try, then, to glory in the Cross of the Lord.

(3) Then this word. Remember that no really great thing is done in any department of life without self-sacrifice. Remember that those whom we admire—great statesmen, great politicians, great teachers, great philanthropists—are men who have drunk in in some measure the spirit of the Cross. Remember that you never did a great thing without something of that spirit. Great things are possible to all; they are pos-

sible in quiet homes, possible to the clerk in the office, possible to those who live in stately drawing-rooms, possible to street-sweepers, possible—I speak that I know—to little newspaper-boys in great cities. Great things are not measured by great opportunities. Great things are possible to the daily governess, to the lonely woman, to the poor railway porter, to the housemaid in an important house, to the footman, to the soldier, as to the statesman. Great things are not measured by the applause man gives them, but they are, as we shall see in that great day which is before us all, according to their consistency with the Spirit of Christ.

Live, live, then, in some serious thought of self-sacrifice. If so, how much happier London homes would be! how much happier your own lives! This, this is a serious matter for all. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord.”

Life, dear friends, is represented to the young as if it were a May morning, with blushing flowers and whispering breezes and breaking dawn, as if May were always May, and June were June. Ah! but when we have had a bad illness, when we have lost a friend, life is represented to men who struggle through it as though it were a desperate disaster, dark, terrible. The first is the philosophy of Goethe, the second is the philosophy of Schopenhauer. And life is really placed before us as having marks of joy

and sorrow. We see poverty we cannot relieve, we see misery we cannot assuage ; the wealth in London and the rank which makes men luxurious and selfish, and other that is used to noble purpose. We have to remember that men are placed in life to use it wisely both as a training and a probation. This is the philosophy of Christ. He blessed happiness in the marriage-feast. Why should not you be happy in a pure life ? But He also consoled sorrow. Why cannot you bear up against sorrow in the power of Christ ? Oh, better than degraded and unscrupulous scepticism, better than cynical scorn—and there is plenty of both of these about—better than cold worldliness, is, the philosophy of Passion Sunday.

Be strong, then ; be true ; be penitent ; be sincere ; be angry at your own sin ; do not be impatient ; struggle to be better. Remember, you have to live for others. Don't be selfish ; don't be careless ; don't be indifferent ; in one word, glory—glory according to your measure and opportunity, according to your weak body, according to your struggling brain, according to your wild, beating heart ; glory, glory in the Cross of Him Who was the brightest and the truest, the noblest and the best, and Who will save you, if you will be saved by Him, by the power of His Cross.

Christ died for you. Christ lives for you. Christ intercedes for you. If you remember the power of the

Cross in your work, in your life, in your penitence, don't forget that if you struggle on in that power, it is possible, it is quite possible—I may venture to say, in His Name, even probable; nay, I may venture to say, in His Name, it is quite certain—that you will be “more than conquerors through Him Who loves you.”

Remember—if you forget everything else, remember this—remember you must die, and in that last tremendous moment, when the past is gathered up into the present, and the present is gazing, pale-faced, towards the future, you will have no wiser philosophy than the philosophy of Passion Sunday. Lay your sin, your sorrows, your troubles, your difficulties, upon shoulders that are broader and stronger than your own. God forbid that you should glory, save in the Cross of your Redeemer; and if you glory in that in penitence and in faith, then you will be—yes, you will be—“more than conquerors through Him that loves you.”

SERMON XIV.

The Witness of a Life.

“When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by.”—ACTS xxii. 20.

S. PAUL is on the steps of the Fort Antonia. It is about Whitsuntide in A.D. 58. The Apostle has been arrested to save him from the tumultuous assault of the Jews, and in the face of the surging and unreasonable mob he is making his defence. S. Paul knows how to maintain a proper reticence at proper times; but his reticence is never strained and suspicious, as is so common among “men of the world.” His character is far too sympathetic ever to allow him to fail in frankness. Often does he allow us to see truth and belief, not in an abstract and unclothed condition, but in a concrete and impressive form, as it has its home in his own mind.

Here, accordingly, he withdraws the veil, and we are admitted as auditors to a scene of sacred and intimate intercourse between himself and his Lord. He tells the assembled multitude that, after his con-

version, his call, his baptism, he had another vision of the Lord Jesus. He was in prayer and in the Temple at the time, and our Blessed Master—so he tells his audience—appeared and spoke. He gave him his great commission as Apostle to the Gentiles. He commanded his speedy departure from Jerusalem; he deigned even to assign as a reason the certainty of his rejection there by the Jews. It is then that S. Paul speaks, and even pleads, with his Master with a frankness and a sorrow all his own. “They know,” he says, “Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee : and”—so runs the text—“when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”

I.

Brethren, in S. Paul's pleading there are brought strongly before us two characters. And these characters so viewed impress us, are meant to impress us, with an important truth.

Let us examine this.

(1) Here are plainly—all the more plainly because unconsciously—brought out some leading features in the character of S. Paul. In his mind is a reverent expostulation with his Master on behalf of his beloved

fellow-countrymen. Perhaps, after all, they *might* listen to him. Surely they would remember how sternly he opposed, how fiercely he persecuted, the sect of the Nazarenes; surely they would avow that if now he was enrolled among that persecuted company it must have been *because* of overwhelming conviction, *because*, therefore, of the power of truth.

S. Paul, we may reverently say, was right, *and* S. Paul was wrong. He was right, if he believed that the noble-minded and open-hearted and reasonable among his countrymen would be convinced; he was wrong, alas! if he imagined that the noble-minded, large-hearted, and reasonable would be the majority. If there was any mistake, it was the mistake sometimes made by really great men. Men who themselves are conscious of pure purpose and lofty aims find it difficult to credit others with lower motives or less truth of heart. They make mistakes, it may be, and they live to suffer dire disappointments; but their mistakes, after all, are not entire and complete *fiascos*.

There *is* some good in every one, if we take the trouble to find it. Every man you meet, the lowest, the most worldly, has somewhere a heart and a conscience, if you are not too lazy, too selfish, too suspicious, to make your way to it with trouble, it may be, with pain.

To touch the better feelings of mankind we *must* trust them, and prepare our minds to meet many a dis-

appointment without despondency, much less despair ; and what is more, even when we have seemed (as S. Paul must often have seemed) to have misplaced our confidence, and to be mere victims of failure, we must be certain of this—certain with an unconquerable certainty ; certain, with a force of assurance proof against all storms of petty cynicism and worldly prudence, that a trust in humanity, as yearning for and needing truth, is never in the long-run misplaced.

Brethren, believe me, man, though a creature, and a fallen creature,—man is also an immortal spirit. *Man needs God.* Treat him as such, help him as such, trust him as such. You will have to prepare for many an immediate and heart-cutting disappointment ; in the long-run your work will tell.

For what really lay under S. Paul's pleading was his loyal affectionateness to human nature. Thus it was never alien to him, in all its beauty, in all its power, formed for truth, capable of goodness, gifted with powers which made conclusion naturally to follow from premise, and conviction to carry conclusion from the intellect to the heart and life. There it was, that great creation of Divine wisdom, so sad, so suffering, and yet, and yet so beautiful. Could he doubt it, would he despair of it ? Surely, surely he might throw himself, in all his generous trust, upon it, and not go wrong. Brethren, *this* I would have you note—that generous

affectionate trust in human nature, warmed and purified as that trust was by grace, fitted S. Paul in large measure for one great office—the office of a witness to Jesus Christ.

(2) But S. Paul sees the force of the Lord's warning, feels too surely that *some* failure there may be. And his words betray another feature in his tender and lofty character. Trustful and affectionate to human nature S. Paul might be. He was more; he was quick as lightning in his power of imaginative sympathy.

Brethren, to be of use to our fellow-creatures, we must have some power of realizing *their* difficulties. There are some who have little natural sympathy, but who cultivate it and acquire it; there are others who are far too selfish to take the trouble to place themselves in the situations of others. I suppose one ground of the awful sayings of our Lord as to the difficulty of the rich or the luxurious entering into the kingdom is that their education and habits too often incline them to live in a world of the grim realities of which they know nothing, and never to trouble their heads as to its misery and sorrow.

Not so S. Paul. Human nature was to him a thing far too beautiful and far too sad, surrounded by difficulties far too various, and beset by temptations far too acute, not to command his sympathy and pity. If his countrymen *did* misdoubt him, could he blame

them? Did he not know himself—so he seemed to argue—know by a bitter and complete experience, *how* deep-rooted and masterful was a Jewish prejudice? Had it not carried him to a course of cruelty and persecution? Had he not, under its sway, joined in the destruction of even the young and noble? He, even he, had bathed his hands, so to say, in blood. “When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by.” When *he* had acted so, could he find it in his heart to blame *them*?

(3) “The blood of *Thy* martyr Stephen!” There is a trembling of heart-wrung sorrow there.

Yes, my brethren, love fastens on a living object; and none ever really love mankind perfectly till they love the Man of men—till, in some sense, they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

S. Paul’s “enthusiasm for humanity” was neither fanciful nor misplaced, because that sympathy and affectionateness found a true support in a passionate devotion to the Person of his Master.

This affectionateness, this sympathy, this self-humiliating and manly sorrow, this deep and passionate loyalty—these received, purified by grace,—this, indeed, fitted—again I say it—the great Apostle for one serious office—the office of witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

S. Paul here is in the regions of memory, and with him, as with many of us in solemn moments, memory does its noblest work.

What is that? Brethren, too often the heated action of the present, the noise of life, the voices of the crowd, the mists of passion, the choking dust of self-interest, all combine to distort the objects around us, and to place acts and decisions in a deceiving light or in false proportions. "I am the Light of the world," says Jesus; and, sooner or later, *that* Light will, if we will have it, show us truth. It often happens that, in memory, we have the fact again before us, with all the disturbing forces gone. Still as night is the chamber of memory; here can be heard the voice of conscience, once drowned in outward sound; here stands and whispers the solemn witness of experience, which has tried our hasty acts and judgments, and shown them to be unsound; here, above all, is the calm temper of our eternal being, and the clear, pale light of the words and character of our Master. O awful chamber of memory, draped in sable, still as the chamber of death! How often, oh! how often, have voices in thee revolutionized the estimate of a life; how often forecast the awful award of the tremendous future; how often been the scenes of

awakening and the starting-points of penitential sorrow !

S. Paul had taken part, some two and twenty years before this defence in Jerusalem, in a popular tumult, which had ended in the death of a reputed blasphemer. His part had been prominent; his vote had been given for execution, and with unflinching consistency he had taken his share in carrying out the sentence. But that young man's face had certainly haunted him, and the tragedy of his death had left an ineffaceable impression. This was not to be wondered at.

The type of character represented by Stephen has its points of special interest. He was young, and youth is the season of hope and love and joy. It would seem, then, that death is a special hardship for the young. And certainly, in some ways, this is true. What so hard as to exchange the brightness of the sun and the freedom of the boundless sky for all those associations of darkness which cluster round the grave? Even to the well-worn faith of the aged these have enough of sombreness and sufficiency of sorrow. To pluck a flower before it has attained the fulness of its beauty seems to carry with it thoughts of sadness, of a course unfinished, of a purpose unfulfilled. In a young life, too, there scarcely seems time to perfect character. In Stephen, too, there must have been the original outfit either of strong Jewish nature with

the added culture of the Hellenists, or possibly not only the culture but the blood of pleasure-loving Greeks. How should the child of a wild and enthusiastic habit and temper, any more than the child of the desert and the mountain, choose deliberately the darkness of the grave?

Ah! there is a spiritual world fresher than the mountain, more free than the desert, fairer than the dreams of a poetic mind. All men have had their souls swept across by some flitting vision of its beauty, for all have had "the Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world;" but the Christian has had the most vivid dream of it, for his dream has rested on revelation. Still nature *does* insist on a certain sorrow in this life ending all too early, and there *are* to young life gifts and blessings which make it—it would be false to say the contrary—which make it difficult to die. To part from youth, and natural hope, and a land of sunshine, and the faces of friends, must have been, methinks, as far as nature goes, as hard for the young martyr as for other men.

And yet there are blessings and helps peculiarly the property of youth, which make it easier as well as more blessed to travel thus across the frontier of the Unseen. Perhaps it was this which had flashed across the Greek mind, and found utterance in the music of Menander—

"Ὀν γὰρ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν ἀποθνῄσκει νεὸς.

Youth is the soil in which are rooted *principles*—those solid foundations of true and noble action which are laid in the understanding and cherished by the heart; cherished there, if cherished at all, with the warmth and life and energy which belongs to enthusiasm. In a true soil principles doubtless expand and develop and grow strong in resistance by the experience of advancing years; but they may not bend and rise again, but break and perish by the trials of an evil world. To the young, in the full freshness of ardent, energetic impulse, they have special power as the need for them is special. This was so in Stephen. In the rush of that mad Jewish tumult he might seem an audacious miscreant and a mere blasphemous fool. Not so in the chamber of memory. S. Paul could not but remember the pathetic sadness of youth, doomed and willingly surrendered to death; he could not be callous to that intellectual force which was marked on the countenance of Stephen; much less could he forget the extraordinary moral power and the entrancing spiritual loveliness of the young decisive face when the whole council were struck by his words, and struck still more by his unearthly beauty. What was it that had been so strange about him then which had pierced the soul of the persecutors, and now wrung the Apostle's heart with tears? Spiritual power, brethren, and Divine love. The strength of a soul grasping truth with deep conviction; the

sympathy of a soul feeling for those who were missing that priceless treasure; the persevering force of a soul which could act on that conviction and that sympathy, unsubdued by the forces of a painful death; the passion of a soul purified, elevated, unearthly—glorious, passionate devotion to humanity; passionate love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ah! S. Paul had been thrilled by it once. Ah! in memory he took its true measure with love and sorrow now. Stephen had fulfilled a lofty office—the office, the great office, of witness to Jesus; and Paul, now illuminated with the “Light of Life,” could realize its real meaning. It is no longer “blasphemer,” “injurious,” in a voice of fierce condemnation. It is in accents of—oh! such humble and manly sorrow: “When the blood of *Thy martyr* Stephen was shed, I was standing by.”

III.

Brethren, these are two high examples of *how* truth is handed on. Truth—“the truth as it is in Jesus”—is, above all things, brought to bear on the lives of others by the force of *witness*.

Notice what a part that word plays in the systematic advancement of the kingdom of God.

Our Blessed Lord Himself is called “the Faithful Witness,” because in His human nature He shows the

Divine character and will. S. John the Baptist is proclaimed as "a witness," to bear witness of "that light." Christ is witnessed to even by the Almighty Father.

Brethren, the spread of the light of truth must be by the force of witness. As with the Father, as with Christ, as with the forerunner, so with those who followed. The very office of His followers Christ so describes. "Ye," says He—"ye shall be witnesses to Me." And what is enjoined upon them collectively is told them singly. In this very passage S. Paul repeats that he was commanded by his Master to be a "witness to all men;" and the sacred word "martyr" is, as you know, only one form of the word "witness," which the loving instinct of the Church has appropriated to those of Christ's faithful servants whose witness has been sealed by blood. And the Church herself, in her strange and checkered history, whenever she has been true to her Master's teaching, has been His "witness" upon earth.

IV.

My friends, what is our duty in face of such a fact? Well, first we ought to learn and remember God's way of advancing truth. Great is the office of the preacher, serious the place of the prophet, valuable

the work of the teacher. 'There are, there have been, times and circumstances in which the Church has had to dispense with them. But one thing in the Christian Church cannot be dispensed with, and that is the witness of a holy life.

The light of the sun is warm and glorious, and does its work for the world and for men because the encompassing atmosphere receives and distributes its rays. And "the Light of Life" can only shine in the fulness of its blessing and beauty on suffering mankind when it is truly reflected in humble and serious Christian lives.

Indeed, we do not teach others so well by the words we speak, nor win them so truly by the arguments we use, as by the living faith in the mind where truth is reigning, and the love, in act and manner, proceeding from the heart, where sympathy and devotion hold their sway.

V.

Brethren, there are, we may remember, three spheres of witness where we may, by grace, do our duty.

(1) We must take *our* place in the general witness of the Church.

The solemn offices of daily prayer, the special efforts of mission zeal, above all, the great Eucharistic service,—to take part in these is to take our part in the

Church's witness, before this world and the other, of the sovereignty and glory of Christ. Above all, in the Eucharist—the Church's prayer-meeting—do we witness to our Lord. Surely those who are confirmed should be more earnest and diligent in penitential preparation, and then in receiving the Bread of life. But what is needed is not so much *frequent* communion as *good* communion. Surely also all baptized persons should be devoutly careful in attending to plead the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Only demoniacs, the unbaptized, and the excommunicate were excluded in the early Church from the mysteries. Why do Christians now so willingly class themselves and their baptized children in such classes as these? Superstitions die hard. And the miserable superstition that baptized Christians, who are in grace, but who for some good reason do not communicate at a particular celebration, ought suddenly to break away in the midst of the Communion Service, and exclude themselves from the opportunity of Eucharistic worship and pleading, dies hard like the rest. Even good men have sometimes given their sanction to this indevout practice, so insulting, as it seems too me, to our Lord. This is usually from a sort of confused notion that it may be put in place of Communion—as if a possible danger of abuse is to take away a religious duty. Eucharistic worship will *not* take the place of Communion; but if you are baptized and not confirmed,

or if confirmed but, for some adequate reason, not communicating except on some particular occasion, do not think that laziness is devotion, and that breaking away from the Eucharistic devotion and Eucharistic worship can possibly be pleasing to Christ. Remember that the habit of leaving in the middle of the Eucharistic service, unless from necessity, is grounded upon little else than a corruption,—a bad custom arising in indevout and careless times—and finds no countenance in the Bible, the Prayer-book, or the teachings and customs of the Universal Church.

Every good Christian should be present at the Eucharist, to join the Church's prayer-meeting, if possible, every Lord's day.

Every good Christian, when once baptized, should bear his witness in the Church to the love and the sovereignty of Christ. And in this connection I may remind you of the duty and benefit of "spiritual communion." It may, for many reasons, be *impossible* for you to be present at the Eucharist every Lord's day. Well, then, take care, if you are a faithful Christian, whatever happens, to spend ten minutes or a quarter of an hour on your knees in "spiritual communion." Excellent and devout books there are to help you, but the *essence* of the exercise is (1) to join yourself in heart, and even imagination, to some congregation you know of where the Sacrifice is offered; (2) to use devout prayers on the Passion;

(3) to unite yourself in will and intention with your pleading Master, and with Him, and "in thankful remembrance of His death," to "show" that death before the Father, and to pray for yourself, for the Church, for those you love. So will you be kept closely in the grace of Christ.

(2) And then we each must bear our witness in the sphere of private life. It has been a favourite gibe of unbelievers that modern Christianity is little better than a "civilized heathenism." Alas! it is too true that too often, bearing the Name of Christ, we are pitifully unfaithful to His teaching and example. But it is one thing to say that weak mortals often fail, another to assert that Christianity is itself a failure. Behind all such gibes, there is often, even in cases where they are not traceable to malice of the enemy, much puzzle-headedness, and much "shortness of thought." God, let us remember, has given to us individually two revelations—one by His Providence one by His dear Son. If His Providence has placed you in a state of society as wholly unlike that of the early Christian disciples as it is possible to imagine, that position is His will for you. And what is *your* probation? what is *your* duty? Dear friend, dear fellow-sinner, let us not endeavour to shift responsibility by blaming God. Your business is, by His grace, to apply, under very altered conditions, the *principles* of the life and character of Christ. Your business is to be a witness to Him.

After all, the love of Jesus Christ our Lord is the central force of real Christianity. In the spirit-world, and the world of multitudinous spiritual act and choice of the soul with God, motive is everything. Motive is a dominant and energetic thought, quickening the will, and is itself reinforced and invigorated by the grace of God. Every act of duty done for love of, in thought of, our Master, is an act of witness to Jesus Christ.

The noble lady who denies herself a book or a gown to have more to give to the poor, who rouses herself from her tempting life of easy luxury to think of their sorrows and work for their good; the sufferer in weak health whose will conquers natural languor, or whose self-restraint subdues temptation to complaining and a tendency to despond; the young man in the City who rises earlier to be present at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, or to gain time for prayer; the young man, at a distance from the Church's ministrations, who, if he cannot be present in person at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, joins himself to it in heart, and makes his "spiritual communion" for ten minutes on a Sunday morning; the footman or the servant-maid who strive to do work regularly and thoroughly when not under their masters' or their mistresses' immediate eye; the mother of a large family who cheerily struggles to feel for, sympathize with, and help the children and servants, to attend

to whom is to absorb in great measure her leisure hours; the hardworked clergyman who maintains gentleness, patience, diligence, amidst the crowding disappointments which beset the ministerial life; the busy man who fulfils the calls of duty, and saves time for self-denying work for others; the young who conquer laziness, passion, desire for wrong pleasures; the old, the sick, the sorrowful, who have to suffer and still be strong;—these, and such as these, acting under the power of a motive of love and loyalty to their Master—these are witnesses to Jesus Christ.

(3) And then we may be called upon, some time or other, to bear our witness in special crises and amidst unusual difficulties. May we not fail then!

“When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by.”

In the shedding of that blood there was power—power that told upon and pierced the soul of Paul. Sacrifice is always real power, and without the force of sacrifice nothing can be done. If life is not to be useless and wrong, we must learn *sacrifice*. How often, oh! how often, have we, in obedience to duty, to give up *our* cherished desires for the sake of others; and if witness is to be borne for Christ—such witness as will tell on souls and forward the kingdom of God—it can only be done by, and its success will be precisely in proportion to, the tax it exacts of sacrifice.

We are not always, my brethren, to be carrying

our religion, any more than our hearts, on our sleeves ; but *religious principle* should always guide our actions, and times come when that principle is shown and is strengthened by sacrifice.

Such hours come to most of us, when, under stress of temptation and at some apparent momentary loss to ourselves, witness must be borne. If it be so borne, it is never lost. The corn of wheat fell into the ground and died, when Jesus was crucified. He was not long "alone." Stephen, and others like Stephen, were the fruits of the Passion. Stephen, following his Master, gave the testimony of his life-blood. He was gone—it was soon over ; like the Cross, it *appeared*—that life and effort—to be a pathetic tragedy, a melancholy failure. It was nothing of the kind. It was not lost upon Saul. He was "standing by." And Stephen's face was not forgotten ; Stephen's prayer was not unheard. Saul the persecutor soon surrendered to the same loved Master for Whom Stephen died ; and how many thousands owe their hopes in life and in death to the witness of S. Paul !

So the light is handed on.

O Light of Life, give us the wisdom that cometh from above, to know when to witness and how ! Give us the grace of loving faithfulness, that when the moment of our trial comes, we may not be wanting to Thy call and claim !

SERMON XV.

The Church and the World.

“The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. . . . Without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”—S. MATT. xiii. 33-35.

IT was by the seaside, with the listening congregation of the astonished and startled followers standing to hear, with the boat close to the shore in the clear Eastern weather, on the clear Eastern lake, that our Master uttered that splendid succession of parables of which the text is one.

It must have been a striking and pathetic sight—the simple multitude, the entrancing Teacher. Yet in that multitude, much as many hearts must have been stirred, bright as the flashes of truth which even then certainly struck many minds must have been, not one could have had any nearly adequate conception of the tremendous truths enshrined in such words—truths which *we* begin to realize “on whom the ends of the world are come.”

I.

It is often said that our Blessed Master taught in parables merely in accordance with a natural Eastern fashion. Certainly He Who willed to be born as a Jew would and did conform to Jewish habits of thought; but the light of Jesus is the Light of Life, and such forms of thought are inadequate thoughts and cannot explain the whole. A deep and great teacher is above all things suggestive; he is the wielder of the mighty weapon of reserve.

Brethren, think for a moment what is meant by reserve. It is not the reverse of enthusiasm, or the contradictory of earnestness, or the foe of passionate devotion to truth. Not so. It is power—a power of the highest, if of the severest, kind; it marks in the actor or the speaker that sincerity of moral self-government, which will not permit a serious mind to forget the sanctity or to waste the resources of Truth.

Reserve is a real force, and it is the force by which the inner vigour of one mind or one soul is seen to tell most perfectly upon another.

Christ spoke with a severe reserve. His parables were pregnant statements. Had He pleased, He might have stated in completed history the whole of

His meaning. He did not so please. He left sketches, so to speak, and nothing more. He suggested much more than He said. Perhaps it would have been ill for the men to whom He spoke had He told them all. Truth *told*, not *taught*; truth launched at unwilling ears or incapable minds, may be positively injurious. Perhaps it would have been ill for us had He plainly told us all. He Himself taught that there were many things that could not then be "borne;" and, indeed, it seems that it is only after the travail of centuries and the sorrows of time that we are able to dimly appreciate many of His suggested mysteries as to the meaning, the power, the function of the kingdom of God.

In the parable before us our Master is speaking of the Divine kingdom, and *in this manner of speaking* of it does He not throw some light on those vexed and perplexing questions which have risen again and again in many minds as to Christianity and the higher life? What, brethren, that is our question,—what has the Light of the world to teach us as to the relation to that society which we know so well, to which we in fact and inextricably belong—to the teaching and life of our King?

II.

Probably never has any soul wakened up to the mystery of the world in which we live without soon being startled by the chasm that yawns—so it seems—deep and impassable between the teachings of the New Testament and the society of our time.

Indeed, it is unfair to say “of *our* time,” for we may travel many centuries back in the history of Christendom and see that contrast in even more arresting sharpness and more glaring colour than we see it now. To cast our eye over European history, with its wars and sufferings, its misused lives and cruel chronicles, its treacherous diplomacies and hard and un pitying oppressions; more; to cast our eye, in which tears might well find place, over the history of the Church—the narrowness and unfairness, the worldly pride, the neglect of duty, the misunderstanding of call and claim, to say nothing of the unutterable wickedness and heart-breaking cruelties—and then to turn to the Sermon on the Mount, to many of the Epistles, to the closing chapters of S. John, gives at first, to a thoughtful mind, a sense of indescribable shock.

We know that when our old world was crumbling in its self-made ruins, then Christ came. We read

back in the history and literature of that old world the unutterable abominations among the mass of mankind, and, among the few who felt and thought, the unspeakable despair.

Then came a fresh beginning, a new life. There was a spectacle of unearthly beauty in the noblest and holiest of lives, of Apostolic self-forgetting in the little band that followed their Master.

And then we travel on, and reading the lesson of modern history—whether in Church or State—and looking with our own eyes at the world we live in, we are inclined at first to ask despondingly—Are *we* much better? And are we not then tempted to the brink of a moral despair? Brethren, for Christians we may be sure of this—a philosophy of despair is a philosophy of falsehood and disloyalty.

Still the question will drive itself home. In view of the state of modern Europe, its wars and quarrels, its deceits and falsehoods, the luxury and selfishness of the rich, the weariness and sorrows of the poor, at worst the worldliness of the Church, at best its respectability, is the whole thing a failure? Has Christ no part or lot in modern society? Is Christendom a standing witness to the forgetfulness and betrayal of the teachings of the Master?

A thousand sayings of the great Teacher will rise to our mind. We have listened to them read in Church in early days, with a sense of wonder, of

bewilderment, as to what they could mean for us who live lives which look so singularly unlike the life of Him Whom we call our Lord. Such is the contrast.

III.

Then—and in this age of keen criticism, of self-reliant dogmatism, of peremptory and self-satisfied decisions—answers are given glibly enough.

“Modern Christianity,” we are told, is nothing other than “a civilized heathenism.” The same passions are at work, the same ambitions jostle one another, the same motives prevail, the same tragic drama of injustice and suffering is played over again. There is a difference, but it is only the difference of a finer culture, and a more prudent sense of better means for attaining the same miserable ends. It is folly—so it is argued—to pretend that the world is any the more guided by the severe precepts of the Gospel than was the world into which Christ was born.

This is easily said, and, let us grant it frankly and sadly, there is too much ground for the saying. Modern Christendom is not the Christendom of the small band who stood by the Cross, or watched the heroic suffering of Stephen or the majestic close of the conflict of Paul. Human nature is still human

nature, and it is bad enough and sad enough and un-Christ-like enough to make the heart of a Christian ache and tremble.

And yet, and yet it is true that a great change *has* come. There is—to speak now of nothing more—a different sense of the value of human life, and the dignity of the individual soul; there is a different sense—with all our baseness—of the place of women; there is at least a deeper, sterner feeling of the meaning of social as well as individual responsibility. Bad as things look, a leaven has been at work, and *in some sense* the whole lump is leavened. Allowing fully for the falling short from the letter of Christ's teaching, it is at least false to call the modern Christendom a "civilized heathenism;" it is bad enough, but it is something very different from that.

Or another explanation of despair is ready to hand from a different quarter. Modern society is nothing else—so runs this teaching—than "the world" as branded by S. John. It is wholly alien from Christ's teaching; it has no part nor lot in Him. It is to be utterly and absolutely and unhesitatingly forsaken. We must flee from it, and abjure it. Its conditions will not square with our Master's teaching. We have no duty but that of "shaking off the dust from our feet" against it, and coming out of it, and not touching the accursed thing.

So run the explanations. Our fears are entirely

well founded; Christ has no light for modern society. The leaven has lost its subtle charm. My friends, whatever grounds there may appear to be for such decisions, there are objections to them which are fatal to their truth.

IV.

To accept such explanations is boldly to assert Christ's work to be a complete failure.

"I came not to condemn the world, but to save the world." This is as true a saying as the severest and most trenchant teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It takes very little subtlety of thought to perceive that the coming of our Master—making all possible abatements—worked the greatest revolution, social, moral, even material, that this world has ever known. At the first blush, even, and taking a broad view, this is evident enough. To take one example only, the treatment of human suffering, granting to the full the irrepressible upspringing of human cruelty, is a wholly different thing from what it was. Speaking from the low platform of mere human expediency, it might seem wise to let sorrow and suffering have their way, and to cling to "the survival of the fittest" alone as the most expedient process. The question has to be asked—Is that and can that be done? And for an answer we need go no

further than our established "Hospital Sunday;" we need look no further than the hospitals and orphanages of modern London.

Whether up to the high-water mark of our Master's teaching or not, the entrance of Christianity into the world has worked a vast, a blessed revolution. It may have worked slowly, but who said it would not? Certainly not Christ. Heaven does not perform its subtle function in the twinkling of an eye.

But further, it is all very well to say, "Shun and forsake modern society;" but the thing is impossible. God does not ask the impossible. No fair-minded man can content himself with a *dénouement*, which is born of little else than a lazy reason, when it fastens upon Christ a demand, not for what is hard—which we freely grant—but for what is simply impossible. We are children of a modern state of society. In that we must live, part of that we must be, and whatever difficulties may cross our path in applying our Master's teachings to a state of things which His providence has brought about, for these difficulties there must be a wholly other solution. "Ever the worst turns the best to the brave." It is no part of a Christian character to believe that difficulties are impassable, instead of deeply and sincerely believing that difficulties are permitted in order that they may be overcome.

Ah! brethren, believe me, whether for society or

for the individual soul, there is no more complete surrender to a subtle and strong temptation, there is no more cowardly act of deep and fatal treachery than the abandonment of ourselves, with the image of Christ's life before us, to the philosophy of despair.

Of course, there are those who, by temperament or from lack of taking trouble will only look on what is bright. Their action is false to fact. There is much that is dark, terribly and terrifyingly dark, in the spectacle of the modern world.

Of course, there are also those who see nothing but darkness—before whose eyes the night-clouds seem always looming, and who will not see one streak of a healing dawn. They, too, in their philosophy, are false to facts. They are fatal guides to follow.

Bad the sunny optimism of Goethe, worse the dreary pessimism of Schopenhauer; better the recognition of the darkness with the eye also fixed on the morning; better the certainty that the heaven is working; better—a thousand times better—the teaching of Christ.

V.

Yes, for here and now let it be never forgotten, that however severe and exacting the sayings of our Master—and exacting and severe they were—there was through them all, as through all Divine

revelation, the assertion of, and insistence upon, an indomitable hope.

But besides, it is not away from the question to remember what the New Testament really means by "the world."

The expression "the world" is, of course, used in many different ways in Holy Scripture. The senses attached to it are sometimes of commendation, sometimes colourless, and sometimes entirely condemnatory. What is meant by "the world" in this last sense is, indeed, to be forsaken and even spurned. It is a vast tradition of evil sympathy with sin. It is the moral and mental condition of human nature when God is utterly put out of court and left on one side. It is the result of unceasing and accumulating sin. It is a mode, a fashion, a temper, a tendency, a false attitude of mind, a way of looking at things which has a subtle and tremendous influence on the mass of fallen men. It makes light of sins of commission; it treats omission as of no moment whatever. It is sometimes distantly respectful towards God, keeping clear of Him as far as possible; it sometimes simply ignores the fact of His existence. It is chameleon-like in its transformations. It is sometimes persecuting, it is sometimes sneering, it is sometimes attractive, but it is highly respectable. It is a corroding, poisonous agent, undermining true religion, destroying earnestness, opposing and hin-

dering allegiance to high ideals. It rejoices in the commonplace, and poses as the apostle of common sense.

Now, *this* Christ opposed. This is overcome by the faith of His people. This is so hostile to God, that to be a friend to it and to God at the same time is impossible. But, then, this is not modern society. It finds its home, indeed, in *all* societies; it has succeeded, alas! too often in invading the Christian Church.

There is no doubt that society is of God's appointing, nor that, though it is so, a force of corruption has, alas! affected it. In each human soul there is much of sin. And when human souls are brought into contact, it is often true that the sin in each is drawn out by the other, and the result is what S. John denounces as "the world."

But none the less "the Son of God is come." The great Enemy of "the world" has been at work; the "leaven" has been working with marvellous and availing energy; and, in spite of the worldliness and wickedness which we see around us, we cannot put our finger swiftly and certainly on any form of modern society and call *it* "the world."

VI.

No; to be quite true, we must thank God for the great gifts He has given us in His tenderness, by casting our lot in that phase of society in which we live. In what other age could we have so fully enjoyed liberty, and so truly learned how best to use it? In what other age could each of us have hoped to work out his own line of thought and purpose with such slight hindrances? In what other age could we have had such peaceful, unmolested homes, or found ourselves able to appeal with such fearless confidence to an increasing sympathy in those around us for all that is best and loveliest, tenderest and truest, and most strong?

This age has gifts of its own, great and wonderful; and, viewing them earnestly—even allowing for all that is evil—we are faithless towards Him Who “lighteth every man” if we do not acknowledge that the leaven has been working, although the effect is not complete.

But the effect is seen. Thinking men are not able to shut their eyes to much which has proceeded from, or been strengthened by, or been filled with the Christian spirit, though in the *direct statements* of the New Testament no basis or ground for it can be found. Take some examples which every one has felt.

(1) Think of the glories of art when it is touched by Christ. Rudely, yet solemnly, in the Church of the Catacombs this was felt. The good shepherd, with his rescued lamb on his shoulder, as he gathered sheep about his feet, was the example of art feeling the thrilling touch of Christ. Think of the San Sisto Madonna; think of the frescoes at Assisi, at Siena, in the Chapel of the Carmine at Florence; think of Giotto's campanile; think of Michael Angelo's "Night" and "Morning;" think of many a S. Francis on the canvas of Cigoli. Think how, age after age, as Christian history has advanced, Art, which might seem at first sight most alien to the severity of the New Testament, has been awakened by the spirit, has laid its treasures at the feet of,—Christ.

(2) Think of literature;—not merely writings directly and of set purpose religious, but the literature of history and of fiction. In what strange and striking ways this has felt the power of Christ! Here we have learnt much of the working, the secret and certain working, of the loving and righteous Providence of God; much, too, of truth and duty, which has roused or stimulated the powers of our own conscience; much of the sadness and pathos of human destiny, striving within in pity and terror, quickening and reviving sympathy and love. Ah! indeed, in the marvellous works of intellectual genius, in the abundant wealth of literary invention, much, very

much, has felt the touch and glows with the light of Christ.

(3) The same has been said, and justly said, of commerce and of war. Nothing at first sight can seem so away from New Testament temper as commerce, nothing so opposed to it as war. Yet who can seriously pretend that, as the world is, either can be wholly dispensed with? And so it is that commercial men have ever been, and are now, the staunchest and most helpful friends of Christianity; and many of the noblest and holiest of Christians have been trained in the discipline of a soldier's life.¹

In other ages men imagined that some secret power of nature could be discovered the very touch of which turned all things to gold. We have discovered—have we not?—that things which seem in themselves to make for evil have been transformed to fair and comely beauty by an almighty alchemy, by the touch, by the power, by the “leaven,” of Christ.

VII.

What, then, are we to say of the severe and trenchant sayings of Christ? The hating of father and mother, the not resisting wrong, the fear of riches,

¹ Cf. here, and on the whole subject, R. W. Church in, I think, “Christ's Words and Modern Life.”

the hating one's own life, the leaving father and mother, and the hundred others which make us start and wonder,—in view of such tremendous teachings—are we still Christians ?

(1) Well, first, it is true, surely and evidently true, that these sayings had, for that first age, a meaning more literal and definite than for this. It was an age of revelation; it was the time of the great change; it was the upheaving of an old world, and the beginning of a new. It is scarcely to be wondered at that, for that age, a simple and evident and literal force attached to the words of the great Master which belongs to them in a different degree and manner in the times which have followed since.

(2) But, again, Christ's teachings are eternal; they have a meaning still. Evidently, my brethren, they embody *principles*. Principles are truths which can never change. They know neither time nor clime; they are not the product of one civilization; they are not bounded by any acknowledged frontier. They are for all time. In Christ's words lie eternal principles.

It is of unchanging obligation that we should *put God first*. It can never be other than needful that, when the contest comes between Christ and others who may claim our allegiance, our Master has an undisputed claim. Humility and meekness, patience and self-control, unselfish devotion to duty, a faithful watch against a covetous temper and a worldly heart,

—these are always duties and virtues; for them we all must strive.

(3) And, further, whilst our Master has revealed the Will of God in the sayings uttered in His earthly life, He also has revealed it in *the providential orderings* of our lives. Society is God's appointing, and the movement of things is a result of His providential care. We learn His will in the general course of the world in which we live; and would we know His will for us, we must compare and harmonize the book of His providence with the sacred words of the Divine Teacher. The leaven of Christ's life and teaching has so leavened the lump of corrupt human nature that, with all the sins, which indeed are our own producing, there is much in Christendom besides what saddens, much that witnesses to and teaches of God.

(4) But, after all, surely the real harmonizing of Christ's sayings with modern actions has been and is one great work of the Catholic Church. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know," is an unfailling and steadily fulfilled Divine engagement. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." And as the Master foretold, so the disciples asserted, "The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth."

Brethren, there are two opposing tempers, in one of which we may approach the study of our Saviour's

teachings. We may *begin* with the Bible, or we may *begin* with the Creed. We may take the Bible in our hands to examine, not with a spirit of devout meditation to clear our views of spiritual truth, but with the temper of mere rationalism to discover doctrines for ourselves. Or we may receive it with loving and awe-struck reverence borne in the hands of the Church, our mother. If we do this we begin to see how the Catholic Church—which, when true to her high spiritual duty, is Christ in action—has adjusted to times and circumstances the foundation sayings of the Gospel; blessing society in the nation, in social relations, in the holy life of home; warning it of danger, reminding it of its real destiny; applying to it, in the practice of worship and discipline and prayer, the Saviour's teachings to guide it and to bless; never paltering with sin, yet never encouraging unreal, or viewy, or extravagant applications of the Lord's words; showing that highest paths are for some, but high duties and faithful service for all; taking the providential steps by which society has made progress as God's will and revelation, but drawing all things to restraint and duty by the application, as each may bear it, of the words, the sacred words, of Christ.

After all, be sure of this. It is only when we love and live in the temper and spirit of the Catholic Church that we can be sure at once to feel the awful depth and severity of our Master's teachings, and the

certainty of their tone and power being applicable to the world we live in now.

Men who name the Name of Christ may be divided into those who "believe in the Holy Catholic Church," and those who do not. For those who do not, the bewilderment between the Master's sayings and the calls and claims of modern life must ever be extreme, and this can only be met—if that be meeting it—either by putting the whole subject out of thought and memory, or by giving it up in despondency, and viewing Christianity as a beautiful but saddening mistake.

Those who *do* believe what in the Creed they say, feel indeed that there is a deep lesson to be learnt by the awfulness of the contrast; but they feel also that as Christ spoke deep and terrible sayings as well as loving and tender words, so the one and the other Christ Himself is still applying to soul after soul, and to His collective people by His living energy in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Faith, my friends, is always, and in the highest meaning, a sense of fitness, a sense of appropriate application, Divine, unearthly common sense. Amidst all the unhappy quarrels which have interfered with the external peace and communion of the Catholic family, ever has there been the living voice heard throughout Christendom as day by day the Creeds have been recited, and the great Sacrifice offered, and Sacraments administered, and holy cus-

toms handed on ; and so in the solemnity and tenderness of the teaching of the Church the seed of Christ's awful sayings has grown into a great tree. There have sprung up great and common duties, counsels of perfection, modes of devotion, ways of consecrating ordinary or apparently hostile employments. Christ lives, Christ works ; His Church is His Body. There is a living Presence here. We are not philosophizing or speculating on a dead past ; the Holy Spirit has been guiding the Church into a large and harmonious theology of which the Lord's words are the germ ; the Holy Spirit has been guiding the Church into a right dealing with the society in which we live. Thousands of blessings have come to us accordingly. They who *do* believe in Christ's unfailing promise, they who do live in sacramental union with Him, as living members of the Catholic family,—to them there is hope and not despondency ; in the midst of this struggle with evil, still the power is felt of incarnate goodness. The leaven is working ; and society as well as single souls have felt the touch of Christ.

VIII.

And still they stand, those severe and exacting sayings of our Lord. For every soul they have a meaning. It is easy to say, "I cannot and ought not

to 'hate father, mother, yea, my own life;' Christ's sayings, therefore, are impossible and nought." In one sense you cannot and ought not, in another sense you ought and can. Still they stand as witnesses of the high ideal of the Christian life, as warnings of the supremacy of God's claim over all demands however sacred. How to apply them to our own souls,—this needs, indeed, the guidance of the Spirit and the teachings of the Church; but applied in some sense they must be to stimulate us to stronger efforts, to point us to a higher standard, to keep alive that temper of love and earnestness which must be the ruling temper of the disciples of the Crucified. The folly of unbelief, or the fanaticism of unregulated, uninstructed religionism, may sneer at or misapply the teachings of our Lord; still they stand witnessing and warning, lest we should forget the greatness of our destiny, or cease to live in the spirit and powers of Christ.

Still they stand, whenever the devout soul pores over the sacred Scriptures for guidance in the way of life, to remind us what this life is, and what the other. Great may be the heritage to which we are born; children of an age of progress and of splendid if perilous gifts. Full of help are the vast discoveries which have marked the advance of the modern world; full of blessings are the larger, wider views of liberty and justice which have flowed into the

minds of men. Pleasant is social intercourse, glad too the happy hours of innocent enjoyment with those we love. Happy our homes, dear the faces of our friends, blessed and beautiful is pure love, tender and solemn the memories of past joys which teach again the blessed lessons of adversity. Much there is to rejoice in, much to hope for, much to stir the voice of praise as well as the whisperings of fear in a world, in a time, like that in which we live; still the sad figure of the Crucified, still the serious and strange words of the great Teacher, remain not only to supply a further feature in our probation as we learn to meditate on them, and to learn the deep things that are below, but even to remind us of our greatness and our need. Here, brethren, here, when all is said and done, "we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." We must live by the rules of a better country; we must know "Christ and Him crucified" in our own lives of work and struggle; but ever we must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, live in the world as children of the Church, guide our steps in the maze of our pilgrimage by Him Who is "the Light of Life."

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