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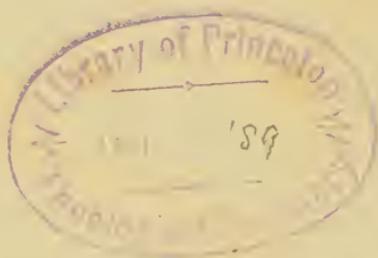
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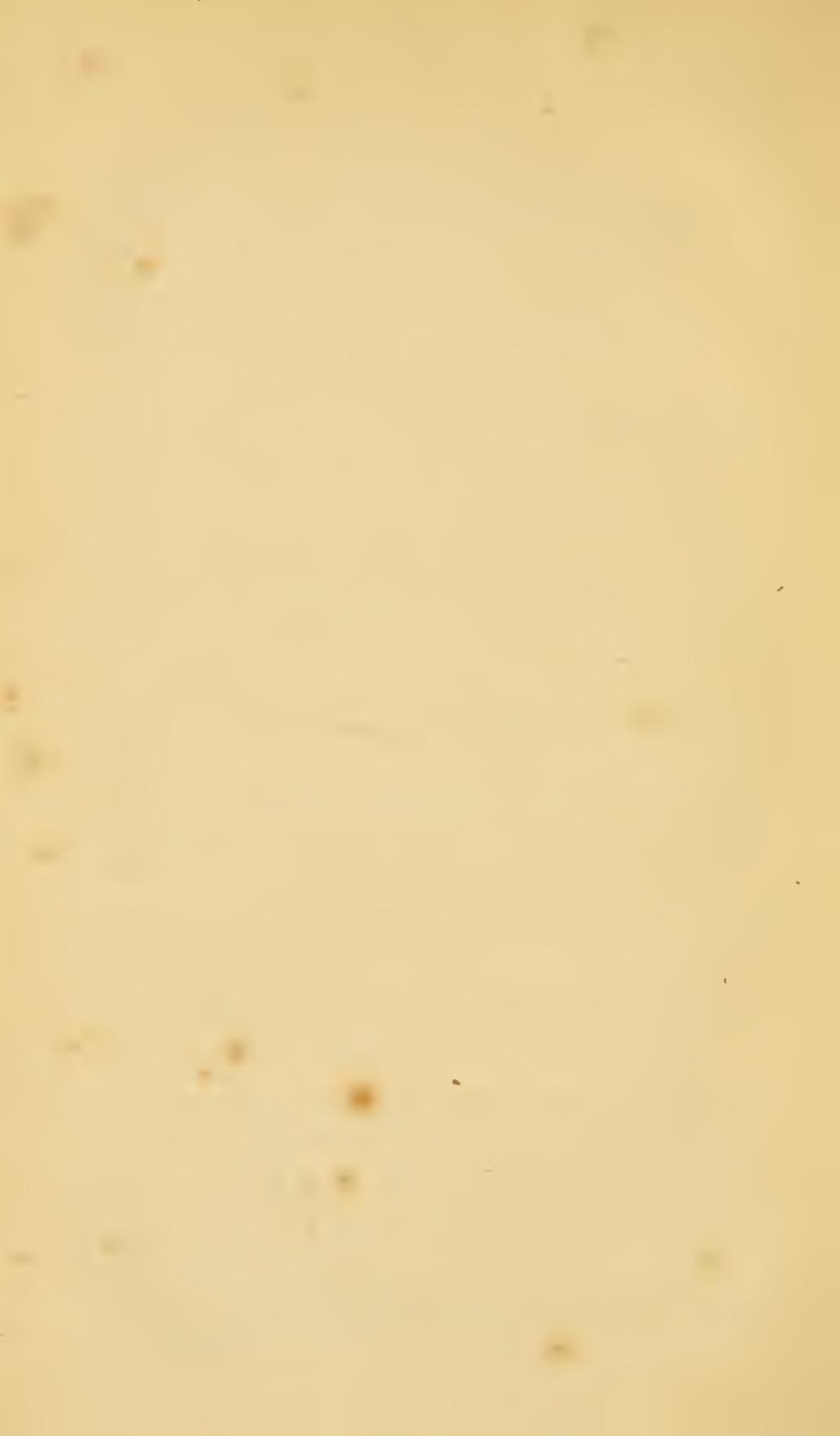
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SERMON CCCXI.

ON RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENT.

MICAH vi. 8.

“HE hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?”

A TEXT like the present is the more remarkable because our Blessed LORD more than once alludes to this, or something of this kind, in the Old Testament, and speaks of the expression as that on the right understanding of which the whole of His Gospel depended, “Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” This passage is also much worthy of attention on this account, that it very beautifully describes in a few words the whole of true religion: “to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with GOD.” But on the present occasion I would speak of it in another point of view, that in which it is more especially here introduced: the purport of this verse is to say, that after all it is no great sacrifice that GOD requires of us, but only a small matter; not something set afar off at the other end of the world, but that which lies close at our home, before our very doors, and at our feet. We have not to stretch ourselves beyond our measure, but only to stoop down, as it were, and remove the stumbling-block from before our steps.

In the preceding verses the sinner had asked, as if moved by a sense of his condition, and desirous to think of some great satisfaction which might atone for his grievous offences, “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High GOD? shall I come before HIM with burnt-offerings?—Will the

LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" And the answer to this is, "HE hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?"

Here is a sinner crying out in the midst of great sins, such as the Prophet so pathetically laments; and we are shown, that under such circumstances there is a danger of our mistaking the whole matter, and being, in consequence, no better than we were before. For, of course, when any one seriously considers what sin is, and what its consequences are through all eternity, and of what infinite moment it must be to please or to displease ALMIGHTY GOD, then we naturally think of what great thing we can do; for the greatest thing we can do seems but very little to express what we would wish. But these suggestions are not usually from the good SPIRIT of GOD; HE does not, for the most part, call us to any thing distant and out of the way; HE continues still to plead with us day by day,—not to do those evil things which we have been accustomed to do, not to leave undone day by day those things which we daily ought to do.

The same thing is described in the Book of Deuteronomy; where Moses had set forth at length the great blessings of obedience, and the certain and irremediable woes of disobedience, after the most earnest appeals he adds:—"This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it¹." The confession of CHRIST crucified (which St. Paul² says this alludes to), and those duties which belong to us all as His followers, are so obvious, that they find the way to the mouth all the day long and to the heart: every one may learn from his own words and his own thoughts that his amendment is a thing which lies about his daily path; here his repentance must begin;

¹ Deut. xxx. 12. 13.

² Rom. x. 6.

and this he knows full well. It is in his mouth and in his heart. His very words and thoughts are a witness of it.

In the Gospels, again, we find an instance which seems to bear much on this subject, when the rich young man comes running and kneeling to CHRIST, and humbly asking, "Master, what good thing shall I do that I may attain eternal life?" Perhaps what he meant was very much the same as is here asked by the Prophet Micah, "Shall I come before HIM with burnt offerings of some very costly nature? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" And our LORD's reply to him may signify very much the same as what HE here expresses by His own Prophet. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to keep His commandments?" "What *good* thing shall I do?" says the young man; and our LORD seems to have answered him long before by His Prophet, saying, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is *good*—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with GOD." This contains every part of our duty to GOD and man.

And thus it is said of Wisdom, that "she is easily seen of them that love her;" and that "whoso seeketh her early" "shall find her sitting at his doors." She goes about "seeking such as are worthy of her: showeth herself favourably unto them in the ways, and meeteth them in every thought." For all other things you may travel far, and compass sea and land, and engage in vast undertakings, as they do who would be great and rich in this world; but to be humble, and just, and merciful, you need not go far beyond your own doors, your own ways, and words, and thoughts. One or two familiar circumstances may be mentioned, as an illustration of that temper in mankind which these passages of Holy Scripture seem to allude to. Among the many various kinds of religion which have sprung up in modern times, there is one which exceeds all others in blasphemy and wickedness, called Mormonism, which calls upon persons to go to a distant place in America to await, as it is blasphemously pretended, the coming of the last Day. And many thousands of wretched creatures have gone there with great expense and trouble; but yet, with regard to the only religion that can save their souls, common honesty, the love of mercy, and humility in the sight of GOD, it does not

appear that these persons have any thoughts and intentions of advancing a single step in these; on the contrary, like the Pharisees of old, they would "compass sea and land;" but, at the same time, were themselves, and would make others, very wicked.

Again, to speak of something very different; in old times, when Christians made long pilgrimages, and went to visit the tomb and place of CHRIST'S sufferings, it was observed, even then, by holy men, that some were eager to do this who were not so willing to reform their own lives. That it was an easier matter to get men to do some great thing of this kind, rather than live humbly, justly, and godly; that they were willing to follow the steps of holy men in great matters, rather than in small things which lay about their daily path.

Something of the same kind may be seen in the many restless changes in religion which are going on in the present day; that men are willing to make great movements in all their circumstances and condition for the sake of religion, far more easily than they can be induced to make that change which consists in nothing more than a quiet but thorough amendment of heart and life; so as to do nothing more than to labour daily to love God and their neighbour more than they yet have done. Some of these changes in religion have been accompanied with worldly sacrifice and loss, and some degree of hardship and privation; and so far, indeed, this is well and good (one is glad to hear of any sacrifice for the sake of religion in these days); but certain it is, that unless these persons are willing to undertake the same trouble and pains in order that they may do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God; then in all such changes there must be a great deal of self-deception: for without these corresponding pains and care to amend their heart and life, these things are more like delusions of the great enemy than the gracious guidings of the Good SPIRIT.

Many, when they become Dissenters or Roman Catholics, speak as if they thought they were hardly safe in the Church of this country; that they could not therein secure their salvation, from want of sufficient means of grace: and yet all the while they have never fully availed themselves of those means which the Church affords; nor ever tried God's way therein of practising justice and mercy to the best of their power, and seeking God

humbly in all His Own ordinances. Many have been before, and continue after, such changes remarkably wanting in fair dealing, in common honesty, in humility, and all the graces of a meek Christian.

But in treating of this momentous and important subject, I would not speak of what is to be found only in particular persons, and on peculiar occasions, but what is common in the nature of us all. We are all of us apt too much to spend our days in this way, indulging, as in a dream, in thoughts of great things, to the neglect of that practical amendment which lies more immediately before us. Indeed this may be considered to be one of the chief differences between those who grow in grace and those who do not; both alike make great resolutions and purposes of amendment; but one, under the guidance of the gracious SPIRIT, attends more to that which lies immediately before him, and therefore puts his good intentions into practice. Many persons, under the pressure of great affliction, or the near prospect of death, or some circumstance of great bereavement, have some earnest thoughts of an entire change of life, and of some great and important circumstances in which they will make, as it were, some atonement for their past sins. But before this great change comes, they are thinking of other matters.

And at the bottom of all this there is a great deal of human pride, too much of self: for the fact is, that we are not the persons fit to do the great things we aspire to, till all our heart and conduct towards GOD and man is far better than it has been. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" says the sinner, "and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before HIM with burnt-offerings?" or, what is indeed far more, "shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" But the answer is, No; what doth GOD require of thee? HE has asked for nothing of this kind. HE hath set before thee what is good—viz. to amend thy doings in His sight. Yet the proffered service here is very good in itself—to make an offering of the most precious object we have. What more acceptable sacrifice than that of the father of the faithful when he offered up his "first-born," when GOD required it? But the sinner is not fit for this sacrifice, neither doth GOD require it of him, till he has amended his ways. For what is said of

charity is true of all acceptable religion and faithfulness, that it must begin at home. It must first commence with the heart, in the household, in the Church ; otherwise our best doings are but the shadow of religion. And the fact is, that a change for the better never appears more earnest and true than when it is thus seen correcting the life, as it were, at its fountain-head—most near at home—most affecting those things which are seen of God only, and in secret.

Let it not be for a moment supposed that a subject of this kind is of slight consequence ; for it lies indeed at the very root of all our well-being. They are things of this kind which make the condition of us all so uncertain in the eternal world. Let us bring the matter practically home to ourselves as much as we can. Now which of us that are here present shall be found at last worthy of the love of God, and to be set on His Right hand after death ? and which of us will find ourselves in the opposite condition ? This no tongue of man can tell ; we know it not. But whichever it may be, this vast difference will not depend upon any great matters, nor for omitting any costly sacrifices ; but it will depend entirely upon the improvements we may make, or refuse to make, in this which God requires of us, which is, to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God. There is no doubt that every one of us is capable of a substantial improvement of this nature, and that our condition hereafter will be in all various degrees according to it. Let every one look to his life, and he will see it ; if he will but be attentive, the SPIRIT OF God will point it out to him ; some sin that besets him, some negligence that retards him in his Christian course, something to do, or something to leave undone. For instance, to take the very circumstance of our meeting here to-day, and all the varieties attending it in different persons ; some are content with going to Church only once on a Sunday ; this is the lowest state, perhaps, to which any can fall who makes any pretensions to religion. If any such be here, then let him begin by allowing this never to be the case from henceforth, but let him make a point of always going to Church twice every Sunday. Even this beginning God will assuredly bless, and lead him on to better things. This is surely a little matter ; but on little points like this the turn of the scale for good or evil depends, and that for ever.

Is there any one who attends twice every Sunday, but does no more than this? Then let him not rest here; but let him also, with devout care and attention, prepare himself for that without which his Christian name will profit him not, viz. the reception of the Body and Blood of CHRIST. And why should he not also be glad to pray in the House of GOD on other days of the week also? Why should he be willing to go so far, and yet no further?

But now, if another does indeed perform all these things,—is never absent from Church when the doors are open to prayer, and never absent from the Altar of GOD when invited thereto,—then surely, with such means of grace afforded him, such a one ought beyond all others to “press forward,” and endeavour to “grow in the knowledge and love of GOD;” by being at all times more devout, more serious; increasing more and more in the things belonging to the SPIRIT; that he may bring forth fruit even to thirty-fold, and if thirty, then may improve to sixty, and then to a hundred-fold. For to him that hath shall more be given; and he that uses grace given, shall grow and increase more and more.

And so also with regard to private devotions, let him that prays twice a day resolve and labour to make it three times; and let him that prays three times be ashamed to do no more than a Jew, and go on till he makes it seven times, as the Christians of old. This is the way for every one, “forgetting those things that are behind,” to “press forward unto those things which are before,” and to labour to make his calling and election sure; being never content with that to which he hath already attained.

And the same is the case also with all other duties. “Let him that stole steal no more;” but let not him that has never stolen be content with this, but let him consider whether, in all matters of dealing, he takes as much care of his brother’s interest as he does of his own. Surely there are many persons who have never stolen, or robbed another, yet are so very far from the mind and spirit which the Gospel requires on this subject,—who take so little pains to get rid of their covetousness and selfishness,—that they must come under the Woes of the Gospel and not under its Blessings. And indeed this selfishness is so natural to us all, that there is no one so honest and just but that he may become still more so, if he would attain to that Christian perfection which

CHRIST sets before us in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the Gospels. Even on this subject, no one can be safe or secure of salvation without fearing for himself, and labouring continually to be better than he has been.

And if on this subject, how much more on that which next follows—the love of mercy. It is on this subject especially that we are told to be perfect, even as our FATHER Which is in heaven is perfect. But how is this to be? Not by going about any great work; but by showing mercy first of all in our own houses, and then to those who are next to our own doors; and then to all we may meet with; by evincing a sincere desire to do them good. And here we may observe, that we are not told to show mercy, but to love mercy—to make it our delight, from our heart being in this work; which can only arise from a long and habitual practice of mercy. It is from long practising any thing that we come to love it.

What does GOD require of thee, O man, but to love mercy? If HE had “bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?” How much more when all HE requires is for thee, as his servants said to Naaman³, to wash seven times in this little stream of Jordan in which CHRIST was baptized; that is, to walk in this humble and despised path in which CHRIST walked. We need not wait. What week is there in the year in which we may not practise some work of mercy? what day in the week? what hour in the day? All our lives, therefore, may be spent in that in which a sinful creature may resemble GOD HIMSELF—in the practice and the love of mercy; in spiritual alms, as it has been called, or in bodily; in doing good to the souls or to the bodies of men.

Heavy laden with the past, and half-despairing, and sore beset with the sins we bear, do we feel at times more inclined to sit down in sorrow than to be active and stirring in the ways of GOD? Then let us remember that the merciful shall obtain mercy; and let the sense of our own great need of mercy stir us up to do something for our brother in his afflictions of mind or body—his afflictions which, it may be, he knows not, if they are those of the soul; for the worst diseases of the soul are when a man is blinded so that he knows them not.

³ 2 Kings v. 13.

But above all things, that which is required of us is "to walk humbly with our God." Oh, what a world of evil would be avoided, if even in religion itself men were but half as earnest in this as they are about disputes and controversies and matters of division! "To walk humbly with God," if this were the one and only desire of men's hearts, then, as in the first ages of the Church, there would only be one religion in the world; for all would seek, and would so seek that they would find, the truth; while there would be but one contention among Christians, who should be most humble in the sight of God, and walk before HIM in the greatest meekness.

But this subject of union amongst all Christians and the Churches of God is a great matter, which concerns us not, excepting so far as we can do any thing towards it; and the only way in which we can further it is by that which lies about our own path, namely, in the daily improvement of our own hearts and lives, by humility and the love of God. This it is which will further our own salvation, or endanger it if we neglect to do it. Each one of us may go home and walk with God more humbly than he has done. Every one of us, if he pleases, may be better to-morrow than he is to-day; and if he does not wish and endeavour to be so, then no doubt he will become the worse.

We may all be well assured of this, that every step we make is a step in eternity—will make us more happy or more miserable for ever; and the steps in this our journey consist of our thoughts, words, and works. This only we know, that none of us are standing still; either forward or backward we must go, every day we live, and that whether we think of it or not: our very thoughts move us on, one way or the other.

We are every day putting forward one step in eternity. It is no doubt in this light we are looked upon by those who are released from the body—by Angels and by GOD HIMSELF: our petty concerns, which we are all so full of, they notice not; but only what steps we are taking each day; knowing, as they do, that those steps are for ever.

In this light our small and trifling concerns are great indeed, as they all weigh in the scale in which our eternal portion depends; our bargains in business, our conversation with others, our manner of praying, of hearing sermons, the turn of our

thoughts all the day,—these go forward, and are written down, graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever. They all go on to make up the character of the great change which awaits us.

Light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work an eternal weight of glory ²; light joys, which are but for a moment, bring about an eternal weight of shame. Surely we are wonderfully and fearfully made; not in our bodies only, but far more so in our souls; while they are in secret, day by day, fashioned here beneath on the earth; GOD seeth our substance, while yet it is imperfect; and in His Book all our members are written ³.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17.

³ Ps. cxxxix.

S E R M O N CCCXII.

ON WAITING WITH PATIENCE.

HABAKKUK ii. 3, 4.

“ For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

We know that these words are spoken especially of the last Coming of CHRIST; for St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, thus introduces the passage: “ Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and HE that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” And then the Apostle proceeds to add from the next verse of the Prophet, “ Now the just shall live by faith¹.”

We may consider it, then, as containing some very impressive points for our meditation respecting that Day. “ The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie,”—it shall speak out,—it shall declare and reveal things in some wonderful way of manifestation, such as never before has been known, quite unlike the silence and mysteriousness which there is at present in all God’s dealings. “ Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence,” says the Psalmist, speaking of the same: whereas up to that time it is said, “ these things hast thou done, and I held My tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself².”

But not only says the Prophet, “ It shall speak,” i. e. loudly

¹ Heb. x. 36. 38.

² Ps. l. 3. 21.

and distinctly, in a manner quite contrary to the former silence of God, but also, "it shall speak, and not lie:"—that in this speaking out of God there will be some wonderful truth, throwing aside all falsehoods, and shadows, and unrealities: we shall hear and see things as they really are in God, Who is Truth; "we shall know," it is said, "even as we are known;" whereas we now see but "as in a glass darkly," but then "face to face;" "God will bring all things to light:" and St. Paul compares it to our present knowledge by saying it will be like grown men looking back on the knowledge they had as children: in other places it is compared to our awakening out of a dream; or to the light of day coming on after the night; for our present state is spoken of as darkness in comparison with it: it is spoken of as the substance, whereas we now see nothing but shadows; of the real abiding truthfulness, compared with which all we now behold is "vanity of vanities." "It shall speak, it shall not lie." Every man is a liar compared with God, as we shall know when we hear HIM "speak." It is for this manifestation that all creation waits from the beginning—"the manifestation of the sons of God." It waits for it, "groaning and travailing with pain;" and the Prophet would stedfastly turn our eyes towards it, saying, it has "an appointed time;" "that Day and that Hour," as our LORD calls it, which no created being knoweth, but GOD only.

And all Scripture speaks of patience being especially needful in the looking out for and looking on to this Day; so the Prophet adds, "Though it tarry, wait for it;" from which we might conclude that it would be long in coming, because he speaks of its "tarrying:" and yet what he adds seems to contradict this; for he says, "Because it will surely come, it will not tarry." And this is the same throughout all the Scriptures, that it will appear to be tarrying, the LORD will seem to be "delaying His coming," and the BRIDEGROOM will seem to "tarry;" and yet (oh, wonderful mystery and awfulness of God's words!) it will "come quickly," very quickly, says Holy Scripture; "it will surely come, it will not tarry." It will seem to tarry and delay, and yet will not tarry nor delay; but come very speedily. Surely we must say that it appears to us to delay and tarry; and yet God says, No; that the coming of it is as quick and as sudden as it is most sure and certain.

How many very wonderful Divine truths are all contained and, as it were, crowded together in this one sentence—"the vision," the appointed and fixed time; its speaking out at the end, and keeping no more silence; its speaking out with some very wonderful truth, "it shall speak out, and not lie:" it will seem to be long in coming, "though it tarry," says the Prophet, and therefore will need "waiting" with patience; and yet the certainty of its coming, "yet it will surely come," and its coming quickly. They who are in the flesh say it is long in coming; they who are relieved from the burden of the flesh and are with God, say, No; it comes, and hath come, and will come very quickly. And what does the Prophet add to this wonderful description? words no less remarkable: "Behold," he adds, "his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." While this great Day of manifestation is thus coming on, if the soul of any man is secretly lifted up, there is something in him not upright, there is a want of fair dealing with himself: in this awful state in which we are in waiting for the certain and rapid coming of that great manifestation of our sinful condition, there must be some deceit in the heart that can be lifted up; and "the just," the upright and good man who deals honestly with himself, will not be able to support life but by faith in CHRIST. And therefore "the SON OF MAN," Who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," showed HIMSELF to us in nothing so much as in His humiliation and meekness; because there can be no *truth* in man, no *life* in him, and no *way* to salvation, but in humbling himself, under a right sense of his own condition, which that Day will reveal.

Surely, therefore, there can be no subject more profitable for our meditation than this passage, which sets before us in so lively and striking a manner our whole condition in this world as a waiting for a judgment of the Great Day, and the temper of mind with which we are to await it. Let us look upon it, and consider it in this light, as a warning and invitation to us to set aside all disguises and deceits, and to look stedfastly in the face the great, real, and abiding Truth; even as they who watch for the dawning day, and because they can behold no streak of light, look again and again; and, on account of their own impatience,

think that the sun is long in rising, while at the same time it is ever approaching, and will burst forth in its own appointed time ; and they will wonder that their short time of waiting could have appeared so long.

First of all, let us search the heart, and find out the disguises in which it contrives to hide from itself in manifold ways the certainty and speedy approach of that great manifestation. Whoever closely examines himself will find that the deceitfulness of the human heart, as Holy Scripture speaks of it, is beyond all he could have supposed. That voice of which the Prophet speaks, that at the end "it shall speak, and shall not lie," may be even now found within him in the still small voice of the SPIRIT OF GOD pleading with him. And for this reason Confession has always been considered so needful a part of true repentance, because it is a bringing out from its own hiding-place and self-disguises and deceits those things that have been done or spoken or thought, which otherwise lie wrapped up secretly in the soul, hiding from the light ; unless some gracious visitation of God should bring them to timely remembrance. Now, take any one in the midst of a careless and self-indulgent, or a proud and indolent life ; take him in the midst of his easy worldly talk about matters of business or amusement, or on the concerns of his neighbour ; or take him when he is busily engaged in his worldly pursuits, and calculating his gains and loss ; or take him in his hours of self-enjoyment and pleasure, or when he feels himself quite unequal to all exertion of any kind for the sake of religion ; and let such a one be seriously asked to pause and reflect : does he not know of himself those things which that Day will reveal, such as renders all this quite unsuitable ; which tends to keep up before himself and others a sort of false appearance and disguise ? Is not all this like as if a man in business, who knew that his affairs were so involved that he could by no means meet a certain day, which was distant, though approaching, should in the mean time refuse to look into his affairs, or to bring down his mode of living to meet his circumstances ; carrying on things, as it were, with a high hand, and engaging in all kinds of pursuits, in order to hide from himself and others the real state of his circumstances. Now this is not at all an un-

common case, we know, in the world ; and the consequence, of course, is such as might be expected,—that such a man is at length ruined in his temporal concerns, and others much injured by him. But this, after all, is but ruin in matters of this world. The case is much more frequent with regard to things eternal, because men are much wiser with regard to this world than with regard to the next ; and because in worldly matters this ruin is so evident when it takes place, that people take the lesson more readily. But in the spiritual concerns of the soul this self-deceit is much more common, and the ruin inevitably brought about by it is out of sight, although it be beyond all recovery for ever. But now, in matters of business, in the case referred to, every one would say it was quite dishonest for a man to go on in this way, pretending that he is well off, when he knows himself to be worth nothing. And in like manner, in this passage in the Prophet, since the Day of reckoning is so sure, and its appointed time fixed ; and since, although it may appear long, yet, in truth, it will be here so soon ; and since, when it does come, it will bring out the whole truth in so wonderful a manner ; in the expressive words of the Prophet “it will speak, and will not lie ;” therefore, adds the Divine Word, “his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him.” There is something, I repeat, not true and honest wherever there is pride in man. He forgets what he is, and what he is coming to ; he is hiding the truth from himself and others, and thinking that he can hide it from the all-seeing eye of Almighty God. And therefore that Day is often described as bringing down the high looks of the proud, because when a man is revealed before men and angels, there is then an end to all pride. “The day of the LORD of Hosts,” says the Prophet Isaiah, “shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up ; and he shall be brought low³.” He will call on the rocks to hide him ; but he will find no place in the cleft of that Rock which is CHRIST, Who alone can cover him in that great manifestation.

Ever since the fall of Adam, to hide himself “from the presence of the LORD GOD⁴” has been the endeavour of every impenitent sinner ; to hide himself, as it were, from himself, and from the eye of God, which is in his soul. This is the reason

³ Is. ii. 12.

⁴ Gen. iii. 8.

why prayer and solitude are so distasteful to us, because it is opening ourselves to ourselves, and unto the eye of GOD. All serious prayer does this; and the longer and more earnestly it is persevered in, the more does it do so. When a person continues earnestly and perseveringly in prayer, it brings him to know his faults and failings; when the heart becomes thus laid open to GOD, it is like the sunbeams coming into a dark room, disclosing and bringing to view things which we thought not of.

The vision will come in its appointed time, and will not tarry; and in the meanwhile the soul of him that is puffed up is not upright. Nothing more is needed than consideration and thought respecting our present condition, and what we are to come to: this is what we have to look to and cherish. More prayer, more solitude, more looking into the account of our souls, more humiliation before God,—in these we are to grow daily, in order that we may be prepared for that vision of God. And for this reason we have to cast aside every thing that tends to deceive, and to lead us to form a wrong estimate of ourselves. When we look back in the truth of GOD, behind us we see the Cross of CHRIST, teaching us humiliation; and when we look forward, before us we see the tribunal and judgment-seat of CHRIST, teaching us humiliation. All things that are of GOD would teach us this; all things that are of ourselves would teach us the contrary. Now, it is very evident if a man is engaged all his time in business of any kind, or matters of this world, he cannot know himself, and he cannot know GOD; and the longer he continues in this state without reflection, the more difficult it becomes for him to do so. Nothing can prevent his being thus absorbed and swallowed up in forgetfulness of his true condition, without some habitual seasons and times for serious reflection. There are some important calls to reflect which are made to us during the year, as through the forty days of Lent, and in the solemn and awakening season of Advent. He who is not more than usually serious at these seasons, while he hears, as it were, the trumpet more distinctly sounding, will never be so. And again, GOD has mercifully provided for us all, that however pressing we may fancy our worldly business may be, yet there is a Sunday in every week, which reminds us of resurrection and of CHRIST'S coming. And as in Holy Scripture we find that the days are reckoncd to begin,

not from the morning, but from the evening going before, as in the first chapter of Genesis we read that "the evening and the morning made the first day," and "the second day," and the like; hence in all Christian Churches Holy Days were reckoned to begin from the preceding evening; so that even now with us we use the collect for the Sunday on the Saturday evening. And in accordance with this, it is very desirable for those who are all the week engaged in the business of the world to begin their Sundays on the Saturday evening, by setting aside, as far as may be, their earthly cares and pursuits. And indeed a good Christian hardly needs to be told this, for he will be naturally glad and desirous to do so, and at all events once a week to make haste to betake himself, as it were, to a place of refuge.

But of course yearly and weekly calls to reflection and devotion will never be enough to serve our purpose, if we would grow in the knowledge of CHRIST. There must be some retirement every day,—at all events, morning and evening; and what most men need is to make these seasons of daily prayer and self-examination more extended, and more serious and deep. To begin this; to do it but for one day, with a firm resolution as in GOD'S sight, would be one of the most substantial amendments that most of us can make. It would bring before us more habitually that vision which shall surely come in its own time, and will not tarry,—which will afford us no further time to make up our account with GOD, when we shall most need it. It will prevent our sleeping and waking, and spending the day in a forgetfulness of what we are, and what we are to come to; it will lead us to live more by faith, which the just man must do, and not in that pride of heart with which otherwise the unrighteous man is puffed up.

In the Jew, GOD required by law, as indispensable for all, a seventh part of his time, and one-tenth part of his worldly goods; but as the promises and privileges given to the Christian are so very far greater than those afforded to the Jews of old, therefore, of course, far more ought by him to be given up to GOD, although His service under the Gospel is "perfect freedom." It is perfect freedom, because what HE requires of the Christian is the heart; and if this is given, all the rest will follow—to love GOD with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength.

But take it even in this sense; consider what it is to love any

one. People cannot bear to be absent from those they love ; if compelled to be absent from them for a time, yet they are glad to return to them, and to be as much with them as possible ; if they are expecting their return, they anxiously and constantly look out for them ; those they love seem to be long in coming, and every thing seems to speak of them till they return.

Surely, then, they who have any love for ALMIGHTY GOD must be glad to converse with HIM in retirement and prayer daily : there is nothing which will more readily prove to us the state of our hearts than our prayers ; the length and seriousness, and especially the attention we pay to our prayers : there is nothing which will more fully prove to us our readiness to meet CHRIST in the day of visitation. This was shown by the three favoured Disciples who slept, instead of watching and praying, in the time of our LORD'S midnight agony. Knowing this, HE came to them, and awoke them so repeatedly, saying, " Could ye not watch with ME one hour ? " While HE conversed with them at supper just before, and their hearts burned within them at hearing His gracious words, when in the warmth and fulness of their feelings they made great professions of attachment, and seemed full of the Divine love which His words inspired,—this was not the trial of their hearts. They might have then seemed to themselves and others very faithful, even unto death. But the trial of their hearts was at their prayers. When they were found unable to watch and pray, then it was evident that they were not ready for the hour of trial which was coming upon them. Thus therefore, I say, it is that if we consider and examine what we are at our prayers, we shall have a proof to ourselves of what state of preparation we are in to meet the day of visitation. How truly, then, might it be said of St. Peter, in the midst of his high protestations, " the appointed time," the hour of trial cometh ; " it will not tarry. Behold, his soul that is lifted up is not upright in him ; but the just shall live by his faith." Whenever any one is lifted up with pride, there is a want of faithfulness in him ; and this the day of trial will show ; that Day of Visitation which is the forerunner of the Great Day of GOD.

Now, consider when we approach GOD what is the language which the Church puts into our mouths ; we come before HIM in the daily service as " miserable sinners ; " and this is the character

of our prayers throughout. And still more so in the Communion Service we speak of "acknowledging and bewailing" our wickedness," of which "the burden is intolerable." This, therefore, ought to be the spirit and character of our whole lives, as well as of our prayers; and our endeavour must be so to live as will bring us most to this temper.

Waiting with humility, waiting with patience, waiting for God, —this is the state of the Christian. Now, there is something in this very unlike the spirit of this age and nation, where all is movement and change and excitement, not in the world only, but in religion also. But he who considers these things will have no heart for exciting changes and controversies; but without turning to the right hand or to the left, to Romanists or Puritans, (both of which are so tempting to a restless mind,) he will be glad "wherein he is called therein to abide with God^s," fearing lest by any wilfulness of his own he should miss the protecting Hand, or drown by noise the still small Voice of His guiding SPIRIT.

^s 1 Cor. vii. 20; and again 24.

SERMON CCCXIII.

ON THE PREACHING OF AUSTERITIES.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

ST. LUKE iii. 3.

“ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

THE teaching of St. John the Baptist, as it is described to us in Scripture, was perhaps different to what many would have expected. He had not only been sanctified to God in the womb, and been born of holy parents, and kept unspotted from the world, but when he came forth to preach repentance he had been dwelling for thirty years in the wilderness, not only apart from men, but living in a very hard and severe way, unlike other men. “ The same John,” says St. Matthew, “ had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his meat was locusts and wild honey¹.” He appears to have had neither house, nor home, nor any of what are considered the comforts of life ; all that he had was merely what the necessities of his hard life actually required. And thus from childhood unto manhood did he spend his time in the desert, no doubt, altogether in fastings, and watchings, and prayers, night and day. He was, beyond all prophets of God, one that seemed to look for “ no continuing city” here below, but to have lived altogether as “ a stranger and a sojourner.” The Patriarchs of old showed that they did not look upon the earth as their proper home and abiding

¹ Matt. iii. 3.

place, by living in tents; by which it was expressed that they were but pilgrims upon earth, and looked for a house not made with hands, a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is GOD; but St. John the Baptist does not seem to have had even a tent to lodge in. The Patriarchs of old had their families, wives and children, and flocks and herds; but not so the holy Baptist; he lived only upon what could be found in the desert; he had no wife or child, but looked for a place in the house of God, and “a name better than of sons and of daughters².” Such a life was of his own free choice as led by the SPIRIT OF GOD: this was the very highest and best kind of life; for this his withdrawing from the world was drawing near unto GOD. When he was so utterly removed from all the noise of this world, like Elijah of old, he could hear the still small Voice of GOD in the desert³. As our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF often withdrew alone into the wilderness to pray, and spent whole nights in prayer to GOD, so did John endeavour thus to live at all times. Free from all the pollutions of this world, and far from its cares, all his cares and anxieties were turned entirely to that one thing which alone is needful: he took more labour and pains even than the children of this world do to obtain worldly objects, and suffered more privations and hardships; but all these his labours were to lay up treasure in heaven; and therefore his heart was entirely there.

When therefore he came down among the cities of men as the great preacher of repentance, and found himself surrounded with multitudes of all kinds given up to sins and vices of which he knew nothing, we might have expected that he would have said something of the desert and his own more excellent mode of life; that he would have called upon all men to retire from so wicked a world, and to live, like himself, quite disengaged from all temporal things. But the holy Baptist's teaching was far different from this; he was as gentle and considerate to others as he was severe and unsparing to himself: they confessed their sins unto him, and he entered into all their temptations; and instead of requiring of them great and difficult things, he told them to avoid their besetting sins and temptations, and so amend their

² Is. lvi. 5.

³ 1 Kings xix. 12.

lives. That first leaving off to do evil they might learn to do well; and then, no doubt, he hoped that they would be led on by the SPIRIT OF GOD to higher and better things. St. Luke gives us a particular account of the mode of his teaching: "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise⁴." But the preacher of repentance himself had neither coat nor meat; and he requires them to give up nothing but what compassion for their brethren required. He asks them to give up superfluities, and still to keep far more than he himself had. "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." How different is this from the conduct of the proud Pharisees to these same publicans, who cast out their names as evil, called them "sinners," and would have no intercourse with them. They laid on men's shoulders "heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne," while they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers: on the contrary, the holy Baptist laid on himself "heavy burdens," but was to others so exceedingly gentle, that he said nothing to them even of the heavy burdens which he himself had been accustomed to, and did not require them to touch his burdens with one of their fingers. But not these only; for further we read, "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." Now, if we were not told that this was the teaching of the Baptist, we might have supposed that he would have given very different advice to these soldiers.

Another instance may be mentioned, which shows the great gentleness of this holy preacher, who was greater than all the Prophets and of all who had been born of women, when he had at length come forth from the desert—that he was listened to even in the court of the wicked Herod, although he did not spare him for his vices. We read in St. Mark: "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him;

⁴ Luke iii. 10 14.

and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly⁵." Now we never should have supposed that one who had lived such a life as the holy Baptist had done would ever have been inclined to speak in such a manner that he could have been attended to by Herod. But his meekness, and his love for the souls of men, made him descend to all their ways of life and compassionate their infirmities, while he boldly rebuked them for their sins. He did not call upon Herod to put on the camel's hair and to live in the desert, but only to give up his crimes. Thus he who lived on the food of the wilderness, and was so hardly clothed, could speak and be listened to even by men who wore soft clothing, and lived delicately in the courts of a king. But under all this, what the heart of the holy Baptist himself was, under the severe hardships of the desert, and afterwards when his righteous soul was vexed with the ungodly deeds of men, may be well seen in his own words; for when he was told that all men were following CHRIST and leaving him, he does not complain, and says nothing of all he himself had done, but says, in these most beautiful and memorable words, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. HE must increase, but I must decrease⁶." His joy was in his own humiliation, and in hearing CHRIST's voice. It was the only joy which he seems to have known: no word of himself, excepting to humble himself; no praise of his own mode of life; no upbraiding others because they fell short of his own perfection; no thought of himself in all his teaching; no mention of austereness to the multitude, of a virginal and mortified life, which he himself practised.

We shall find, I think, something of the same kind in all the great saints of GOD mentioned in Scripture. We know of no man upon earth who lived so much like an angel in this world as that other St. John, "the beloved disciple." "They that are accounted worthy to attain that world," says our LORD, "and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of GOD in Heaven, and are the chil-

⁵ Mark vi. 20.

⁶ John iii. 29, 30.

of GOD, being the children of the resurrection." Such was St. John even in this world. But in all his writings he never once alludes to this his mode of life; he never seems to think of himself, or to set forth his own manner of life as a pattern to others, by calling on them to follow his own high and heavenly state, but, on the contrary, he calls on all men alike to love GOD and to hate sin, and love each other: so full was he of humility and compassion to others; knowing that if they would only do these things which GOD required, that HE would reveal unto them higher and better things which HE had in store for them, as far as they were capable of receiving them.

There is, indeed, in St. Paul on one occasion something which might appear at first sight a little different from this, where he says, "I would that all men were even as I myself⁷," when he is speaking of this higher and more perfect state of life; but then, in this very place, he shows also very forcibly this very same thing: how exceeding cautious and afraid he was of seeming to impose this as a burden on others, or to dwell too exclusively or harshly on his own more exalted and blessed state. He could not but wish that all men were like himself, thus wholly devoted unto GOD; and out of the fulness of his heart he could not help saying this; but no sooner has he said it than he seems anxious almost, as it were, to recall it; and so fearful of saying too much, or of even that which he did say being taken too strongly, as if it was the inspired Word of GOD, that he seems almost to unsay it again, lest he should cast a snare or burden over weak minds, or seem too much pleased and satisfied with his own manner of life, and so despise others.

There is another inspired writer in the New Testament, who may be mentioned as an instance of the same kind. St. James the Less, the Bishop of Jerusalem, was very remarkable, we are told, for the very severe and hard life which he led, for his great fastings, and mortification of the flesh; so that being thus the more deadened to this world, his spirit might be the more quickened to heavenly affections and unceasing prayers. But in his Epistle, which is quite full of rules for practical instruction, and strong warnings against the sins of the world which he saw

⁷ 1 Cor. vii. 7.

abounding on all sides, yet in no place does he give us to understand that he was living a life so singularly mortified, and what is called ascetic; on the contrary, the picture he gives of true religion is remarkably gentle, and soothing to a scrupulous and tender conscience: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the FATHER is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It may be observed that the teaching of the Bible is throughout of this nature.

Men are inclined to put themselves forward for great things, and for putting great things before others, because this gratifies the secret pride of our hearts; and certain it is that there is nothing so great but that we ought to do it in religion, and which God will, if we seek HIM, give us strength to do; but this great thing probably lies much nearer home than we are willing to suppose; it consists in overcoming ourselves, and in breaking through some besetting sin which may seem a small matter: so it was in the teaching of the great preacher of repentance; he told men of some besetting temptation that lay at their door—of that evil spirit who was watching and waiting for them in their daily life; which was first and beyond all things to be attended to.

It is as the servant of Naaman said to his master, who was indignant at the humbling commands of Elisha, "If the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean⁸."

Very much like this was it with St. John the Baptist's teaching. The proud Pharisees, and even the soldiers and publicans who came to him, might have expected some great thing that he would have required of them, instead of this washing in Jordan, confessing their sins, with this precept applied and brought home to the heart of each, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well⁹." Perhaps each of them would secretly have said, "Any thing but this; in this thing only let me be left undisturbed." And even guilty Herod himself, when he "did many things, and heard him gladly," would have said, "Any thing but this."

⁸ 2 Kings v. 10.

⁹ Is. i. 16, 17

So also is it with ourselves ; there is no degree of Christian perfection which we ought not to aim at, and may attain to ; but we must begin by overcoming the temptations which now most nearly beset us. Every other reformation will be quite hollow without this, and all other repentance of little worth.

As Moses had said to those children of Israel whom he knew so well, " This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is very nigh thee, that thou mayest hear it, and do it." So the holy Baptist, speaking by the same SPIRIT, again seems to repeat to them after so many hundred years : " It is not afar off ; it is very nigh thee, yea, in thy heart." It was to faith in CHRIST to which he would bring his disciples. And now, after as many hundred years, again the same SPIRIT Who spoke by Moses and the holy Baptist appeals to us also with the same lesson : it is not afar off ; it is very nigh thee. The kingdom of GOD is come nigh thee ; yea, it is within thee, if any where at all to thee.

It is only by this repentance, in those infirmities and temptations which beset us in our daily calling, and by overcoming these, that we are brought near unto CHRIST and the kingdom of Heaven. A life of faith in CHRIST, which a Christian's must be, requires us to set aside high things of every kind, and makes our perfection to consist in humility and the love of GOD. And this humility and love of GOD makes it beyond all things necessary that we get rid of thoughts of self in every way ; and if we labour truly after this perfection, we shall be less and less inclined to think over favourably of our own judgment, or wish to choose for ourselves ; but, instead of so doing, shall be glad to forget every thing respecting ourselves, and to enter into the circumstances and temptations of others, and shall become naturally inclined to prefer them to ourselves.

And this is very wonderfully taught us by the life of our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF ; for if HE had lived in the desert, and different from other men, we might all of us have thought that we must do the same, in order to be saved. But HE came down to, and entered into, the houses of all men ; HE graciously mixed with them, was present at their occupations of fishing or of sowing, was present at their feasts, and sitting at meat with them ; indeed, it is even said that HE HIMSELF exercised the

trade of a carpenter, and HE is spoken of under that name. But all this was not to encourage men in that worldly-mindedness which is so incidental to their earthly callings, but to show them that all these things would be no excuse to them for not giving up themselves entirely to the love of God.

Now something of this kind, which I have endeavoured to point out, is, I think, especially the character of the Church to which we belong. Very unworthy of her as both ministers and people have been, this has been no fault of hers. To those who would attend to her she has not ceased to be, in all her spirit and services, a faithful witness. And if any one would aspire to live a holier life than the world around him, he will find that the Church of England will encourage him in "the more excellent way;"—will lead him by the hand, as it were, into a sanctuary, or into a holy desert apart from the world.

Her enemies are in power, and prevail; yet still, like John the Baptist, she lives and bears witness, though it be in prison; and her still and small voice is heard by all who will listen for it.

SERMON CCCXIV.

ON TEACHING WITH MERCY.

ST. LUKE'S DAY.

St. Luke ix. 2.

“ And HE sent them to preach the kingdom of GOD, and to heal the sick.”

ST. LUKE the Evangelist had been, we know, by profession, a Physician, and he is called by St. Paul “the beloved Physician¹.” And this circumstance of his former profession is alluded to in the Collect for the day, where he is spoken of under the higher title, as being made a “Physician of the soul;” and we pray that “by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed.” The diseases of our souls and bodies, and the healing of our souls and bodies, are both thus put together. And it may be profitable for us to inquire how it is that throughout the Gospels these two are so much connected with each other.

Thus our Blessed SAVIOUR, when HE commenced preaching the Gospel, began also, at the same time, to heal diseases; and always continued throughout doing the same together, teaching and healing. And, indeed, when HE healed diseases, it was of itself like preaching the Gospel; it was thus our LORD showed to all men that HE had power to relieve all those bodily maladies which are the punishment of our sins, and that, therefore, HE

¹ Col. iv. 14.

had both the power and the will to remove those of our souls also. And hence it was that when John the Baptist sent to ask whether HE was the CHRIST, or whether they were to look for another, our Blessed LORD, as the best answer that could be given to this question, pointed to the miracles of healing which HE had performed: "Then JESUS answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear²." Our SAVIOUR evidently wished people to observe and notice, that what HE was doing for their bodies, He was able and willing to do for their souls; and that the bodily cures which HE worked were only like an outward sign and representation, set before their eyes, of what HE would do for their souls, in saving them from diseases and death eternal. And thus, on one remarkable occasion, HE joined both of these together, to the great offence of the Pharisees, for on healing the man who was sick of the palsy in the presence of all who were in the synagogue, instead of telling him that he was healed of his infirmity, HE said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." And when the Pharisees were grievously offended at this, saying that HE spoke blasphemies, our Blessed SAVIOUR explained to them, that as far as the words went, it was as easy to say one as the other; but that they ought to have observed, that the power shown in doing one could do the other also; but that HE had a particular object in doing this; namely, to lead them to observe that His miracles on the body were intended to show them that HE had power to forgive sins. "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the SON OF MAN hath power upon earth to forgive sins³." No doubt our Blessed LORD wished, by thus speaking of forgiveness of sins, to draw their attention to what was implied by His thus healing diseases by a word; so that as they could not doubt of the fact, which was performed before their eyes, so they should go on to see thereby Who and What HE was: for it was very true and evident, as they themselves said, that no one could forgive sins but GOD only; and it was also equally true and evident, that no one could by a Divine

² Luke vii. 19. 23.

³ Ibid. v. 20. 24.

miracle restore men from bodily diseases, without having power to remove the sin that occasioned them.

But it may be observed, that not only did our LORD HIMSELF always work miracles of healing at the same time that HE preached the Gospel, but likewise when HE sent out the Twelve Apostles, and afterwards, when HE sent out the Seventy Disciples, HE gave them power and commission not only to preach the Gospel, but also to heal diseases : when they entered into a city, they were, our LORD says, to “ heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of GOD is come nigh unto you⁴.” And in the Text it is said of the Twelve, that HE “ gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And HE sent them to preach the Kingdom of GOD, and to heal the sick.”

Thus we find consistently throughout, that our LORD HIMSELF and the Twelve, and then, again, the Seventy, all Three orders, as it were, of the Ministry, combined together in one these two blessed works of healing the diseases both of body and soul.

And so, in like manner, we find it afterwards was the case in the Acts of the Apostles ; St. Peter and St. Paul were working miracles of healing at the same time that they were preaching the Gospel. Thus St. Peter heals the lame, the paralytic, and raises the dead⁵ ; and “ GOD worked special miracles by the hands of Paul ; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them ; and the evil spirits went out of them⁶.” And when St. Paul himself was brought to the light of the Gospel, Ananias, who was sent to him of GOD, restored sight to his eyes, at the same time that he baptized him⁷.

Now, in all these cases this was the manner in which GOD showed His miraculous power and presence ; for at the same time that HE healed the sicknesses of the soul, HE thus removed also those maladies of the body which were the consequences and chastenings for sin ; so that what HE did in one case was, I say, the outward and visible sign of the other : and both of them were beyond nature, and were proofs of GOD’s Presence, of the

⁴ Luke x. 9.

⁵ Acts iii. 7 ; ix. 34, 40.

⁶ Acts xix. 12.

⁷ Acts ix. 18.

power of a loving and merciful SAVIOUR, Who was come to redeem both body and soul from the power of the devil.

But this was not the case with St. Luke, "the beloved physician:" this title implies not that he had any supernatural power to heal the sick, but that it so happened that, as men were called from different occupations and modes of life, as the four first disciples had been fishermen, St. Matthew a tax-gatherer, St. Paul a tent-maker; so St. Luke had been brought up to the occupation and practice of a physician. Nor is it indeed stated that he continued to exercise this profession and skill after he was converted, for he might have had the name though he did nothing but preach the Gospel; and yet, from this mention of him, it would seem as if the calling itself had something in it of a sacred and Christian character, so that he continued ever afterwards to be thus known. We read not, in the case of the others, of any allusion to their former life, as containing within it any character that continued with them; nothing of the fishermen, or tax-gatherer, or tent-maker; these were distinct things of themselves, which were lost in their Christian ministry, and had nothing to do with it; but St. Luke is still to the last "the beloved physician." And the Church takes up the sacred allusion, and speaks of him as in some sense a physician both of our bodies and souls. So that, as among the first ministers of the Gospel, there was a "beloved disciple," so was there also "the beloved physician;" the disciple beloved of his LORD and loving men, the physician beloved of men and loving God.

And surely by all these things we are taught some great and mysterious lesson, that healing of soul and body are in some way to go together; in such a significant and remarkable manner are they combined throughout the New Testament, and interwoven as it were together in all the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth: "heal the sick," "preach the kingdom." But then it may be said, these cannot go together in a natural way with us; for they both require separate skill and undivided attention. We cannot have a physician and a minister of CHRIST combined in one; for these two offices must have a different education, and one would become so absorbed and swallowed up in the other, that the right and due calling of both would be lost: so that, generally speaking, they cannot be altogether combined; for missionaries and

pastors cannot have the education of a physician. And yet, notwithstanding this, we may be sure that a very great and important lesson is intended to be conveyed to us by this circumstance, that GOD, in His Own Divine and supernatural teaching, has always combined the two in His Kingdom.

Our Blessed SAVIOUR, when HE would intimate His merciful coming to restore lost mankind, seems to have described HIMSELF, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, as taking care of the wounded man, and pouring into his wounds oil and wine. Thus would HE, perhaps, set forth HIMSELF as the Physician of our souls. But then this Parable contains a lesson which we are all to follow in the literal sense, in binding up the wounds of the sick man, and healing them, and taking care of him. In this we are all to resemble the good Samaritan, and in so doing to become like to CHRIST HIMSELF; for our Blessed LORD HIMSELF is seen throughout in the Gospels in this especial character, as relieving the sicknesses and the bodily sufferings of mankind: it is to be like HIM in the works of bodily charity that we are especially invited; it is in this line of conduct more particularly we are to be merciful as HE is merciful. Visiting the sick is one of the especial marks of His children, to be brought forward at the last day^s. So that the parable which sets before us our duty in this respect is a description of HIMSELF.

But then, it may be asked, why is this so much connected with preaching the Gospel; because the two offices appear to be in themselves quite separate, and yet Holy Scripture so often unites them together, although it is hardly possible that they should in any great degree be found together, excepting where the extraordinary power is given to work miracles? The reason appears to be, that there can be no teaching of the Gospel, no effectual saving way of edifying the souls of men, unless it be accompanied with compassionate mercy and charity. It is very possible for these to be separated, and for men to be fervently engaged in putting forward eternal truth and the Kingdom of God, without love and a humble desire for their brethren's good. Thus we find, not only that the devils believed and trembled, but also that they were desirous, if one might so speak, to confess and

^s Matt. xxv. 39.

preach CHRIST. Indeed, our LORD thought it right to exercise His Divine Power and Authority over them, to prevent them from doing this when HE cast them out. "HE suffered not the devils to speak," we read, "because they knew that HE was CHRIST⁹." It was the constant effort and desire of the evil spirits to make HIM known. "I know THEE Who THOU art," said one, "the HOLY ONE of GOD¹." "Art THOU come hither to torment us before the time²?" said another. Now what was this but to confess the SON OF GOD; to acknowledge HIM as the Eternal JUDGE; to make known among men His Holiness; to show that HE was their enemy, and therefore the Great SAVIOUR of mankind? But yet HE suffered them not; on the contrary, His Own preaching of the Gospel consisted almost entirely in working miracles, and not in declaring aloud the mighty saving truths of His Gospel. HE would not have the everlasting truths of His Kingdom to be made known, excepting from the midst of works of mercy. HE would not call upon men to love GOD, without at the same time showing loving-kindness and compassion to each other. And HE has told us that the great proof of a true prophet, whom we are to follow, will be that of bearing fruit³, that is, the fruits of mercy; for though Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, yet consistent and humble works of loving-kindness he cannot counterfeit.

Now this is very much to be observed in days of religious controversy, when men will be springing up and coming forward, whose great object, they would fain make themselves and others to believe, is to seek the truth, and to impress the truth on others. Now, unless this is combined with a very compassionate regard and sympathy for others, although such persons may indeed have got hold of some great truths which they profess, as even the devils had in Scripture, yet they are to be suspected; the means and the end are to be suspected. Now, although it is difficult to apply all this at the time to circumstances that are passing before us, yet, in looking back, it may lead us to form a correct judgment on things that are past: where zeal has appeared without charity and humility, we may conclude that there is something

⁹ Luke iv. 41.

¹ Ibid. iv. 34.

² Matt. viii. 29.

³ Ibid. vii. 16.

in such very unlike the movements of the good SPIRIT OF GOD. Such may be seen in the times of the great rebellion in this country: those were the days, it has been said, "of light but not of love;" but the very light itself, unless it has love with it, is not the genuine light of CHRIST, Who "lighteth every man who cometh into the world," but rather the false light of him who can counterfeit the Angel of light. And the same may be applied to still earlier times in this country, when men were burnt to death under pretence of religion. When one compares such a mode of teaching religion with the conduct of our Blessed SAVIOUR, it is difficult to conceive how such fires could ever be attributed to any thing else but the great enemy of love, the enemy of GOD and man.

But these are all great matters; what is far more important for us to consider as concerning ourselves is this, that the best way of saving the souls of others, as well as our own, is by works of mercy; and all zeal for religion is to be suspended without it.

Now this is a wonderful provision in the merciful economy of GOD; for there is a great repugnance on the part of man to receive the truths of GOD: "they are foolishness unto him," and "a stumbling-block;" for there is that within him which rises up and rejects them; which tramples them under foot, and rises up and turns again to rend those that bring them. And besides which, religious truths are mixed up very much with controversies which excite angry passions; so that he who has to carry to mankind the truths of the Gospel must always have to bear the Cross.

What a merciful appointment is it, therefore, that they who have to bear these unwelcome truths, have also, by their very calling, to show compassion to the bodily wants of men, and thereby have an access and opening to their hearts; even as our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF, when at last His enemies came to take HIM, HE healed the ear of one of them⁴, and then said, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take ME?" HE first of all shows His Power and His Love for them, and then expostulates with them.

⁴ Luke xxii. 51.

And thus always unto the end Mercy and Truth must go together in His Kingdom. Righteousness and Peace are knit together: and therefore the question is not merely, "What is truth?" but where is the truth together with love and humility? These God hath joined together; and if men put them asunder, nothing but confusion and strife will follow.

SERMON CCCXV.

ON PREACHING THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

EPHES. iv. 1.

“ I therefore, the prisoner of the LORD, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

THIS appeal of St. Paul is very remarkable; he entreats his Ephesian converts, not by his apostolic authority and commission from CHRIST, but by his sufferings; not by his greatness, but by his humiliation. And thus the Cross of CHRIST is carried on through His members; as Scripture beseeches us not merely by the power and greatness of GOD, but especially by the abasement of CHRIST for our sakes; so also do His Apostles entreat us by their own bonds.

And this may serve as one example of the manner in which the Church of GOD, as it was in the purest and best ages, appeals to us even unto the end of the world: if we turn our eyes to the first planting of the Gospel, we there behold the death and sufferings of CHRIST on the Cross; but not that alone,—we behold also around it the noble army of martyrs; the Apostles themselves bear witness to the Cross of CHRIST by their own bonds and their own blood, and thus they make their appeal to us. Such, indeed, is the case with all the early Church; for the fact of the Apostles themselves being martyrs for the most

part, this is only a sample of what the lives of all Christians were; they speak to us from persecutions and poverty, and all kinds of endurance. This is the way in which CHRIST establishes His heavenly Kingdom in the midst of this evil world.

Now this is a point which people do not sufficiently consider; they talk of the Cross of CHRIST overcoming the world, and of the doctrine of CHRIST Crucified, without reflecting on what it means. In order to spread the doctrine of CHRIST Crucified among others, we must of course have this doctrine practically established in ourselves; that is to say, we must be giving up something of our own—must be making in some way a sacrifice of ourselves. This is the only way of doing any good in the world as Christians; and it is from not sufficiently seeing this, that the Cross of CHRIST becomes a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others.

Many seem now to think that the strength of our religion and the means of promoting it, depends on the quantity of money they obtain for its support. And it is very true that this is needed, in some degree, as for procuring books, and for building churches, and sustaining ministers and missionaries. But then, after all, this is but the outside, but the body, as it were; the heart and life depends on something far different; it consists altogether in the SPIRIT of CHRIST Crucified; by men showing that this SPIRIT is within them, by their being willing to make a sacrifice of themselves and of that which belongs to them for CHRIST'S sake. If a man says, I do not feel that I have myself any call on me to go forth and preach the Gospel myself, but I will give up a great portion of what I have in order that others who are more capable may do so; then this spirit is, indeed, sure to promote the cause of CHRIST, because it begins by self-sacrifice. And the means that are raised to support religion in this manner, are a proof of men's earnestness in religion; and this leads others also to take it up in an earnest and serious manner. And thus it is by denying ourselves, that the Cross of CHRIST is planted in the hearts of others: bearing our own Cross in some way, is the only method of promoting the glory of CHRIST Crucified; of following HIM as faithful soldiers and servants, so as to support His kingdom.

Of course temporal means are necessary. We find in the

Gospels that charitable women ministered to CHRIST'S bodily necessities; and that when HE sent forth the Apostles, and afterwards the Seventy disciples, the houses of others were to be open to them to support them. For they had given up all that they had, as it is expressly mentioned of some of them. And we find in St. Paul's letters, that it was a point received and acknowledged in the Church, that ministers were to be supported by their Churches, as the Old Testament also had required. For he brings forward the Law to establish this point as a matter of course¹. All this grew indeed necessarily out of the reception of the Gospel; ministers, and churches, and abundant means of supporting them and all "the poor of CHRIST," sprung up at once; and all the treasures of men flowed into the Church of GOD; for they stripped themselves, giving up all things in order to be like CHRIST.

But it was not money that spread the Gospel of itself in any sense; men that preached it, did not do so from abundance of ease and comfort, but in want of all things: *e. g.* St. Paul declares his intention of going to Rome, the great city of the world, in order to establish there the Kingdom of CHRIST in that stronghold of the kingdom of Satan; and when he wrote to the Romans he declared this his purpose²; but in what way did GOD provide for this object which HE had put into the Apostle's mind? not by kindling up men's hearts to raise a subscription such as would be suitable for so vast an undertaking, but by making him like to CHRIST Crucified. By sending him there in chains to be tried for his life; this was the most powerful and suitable way to preach the Cross. The Gospel, he says, was not bound by his chains, but spread the more freely: his bonds in CHRIST were manifest in the palace³ of the great emperor of the world; it was thus that they were taught the Gospel; and in all other places his bonds preached more powerfully than his words, and added a power to them which was of GOD.

And so it ever had been of old: when the Israel of GOD was taken into the heathen Babylon, it was, as it had been before in Egypt, to bear witness to the truth of GOD in chains. And indeed this power of CHRIST Crucified had always been in all the teaching of GOD; His great witnesses and prophets had borne

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 10.

² Rom. i. 13.

³ Phil. i. 13.

witness almost altogether from hardship and affliction. And when St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of the "great cloud of witnesses" with which we are encompassed in running the race that is set before us, he does nothing but set forth at great length a catalogue of all the sufferings of the Saints of God. He is speaking, of course, of the Israel of old before his time, which had always borne witness to CHRIST Crucified by their sufferings beforehand, as well as the Apostles afterwards. CHRIST is HIMSELF, as it were, the CAPTAIN of them all—"the CAPTAIN of our salvation," made "perfect through sufferings"⁴.

And our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF pointed out this as His especial mark in His own ministers, telling them that it would be with them quite different, and indeed the very contrary to what it was in the world; for in the world they who exercised authority were called Benefactors⁵, for the benefits they were supposed to confer on mankind; they were esteemed and made much of, and set on high for the good that they did; "but it shall not be so," HE added, "among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister:" he that would be great in CHRIST'S kingdom by promoting the salvation of others, must be as he that serveth; it is not by the exaltation of himself, as with those who would get on and be great in the world, but by his humiliation. And this is only carrying on the principle of the doctrine of CHRIST Crucified, as HE HIMSELF adds, "even as the SON OF MAN came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many⁶." This is the only way of converting men to the truths of the Gospel, as it is contained in that memorable saying of our LORD'S, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "If any man serve ME, let him follow ME; and where I am, there shall also My servant be⁷."

Now this text, indeed,—if a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, "it bringeth forth much fruit,"—is usually applied to Martyrs, whose blood is said to be the seed of the Church; so much do their sufferings tend to the confirmation of

⁴ Heb. ii. 10.

⁵ Luke xxii. 25.

⁶ Matt. xx. 23.

⁷ John xii. 24. 26.

the Truth. But the same is true also with regard to every thing short of martyrdom: no one can convert souls, and win them to CHRIST, except he himself be willing to suffer for the sake of religion. The more he humbles himself, the more he denies himself and suffers hardship, the more will the love and the truth of CHRIST shine forth in him. "And I, if I be lifted up," says our Blessed LORD, "will draw all men unto ME;" speaking of the death that HE should die, and of the fruits that should arise out of His Passion: and the same is true of all followers of CHRIST's Cross after their degree, that men will be drawn unto them more and more according to the sacrifices they are making of themselves and of what belongs to them. They must die unto themselves in order that they may live unto GOD; and if they live unto GOD, they will be multiplied also in GOD's good time, and bring many souls unto GOD.

Now all this is of course most applicable to the appointed ministers of CHRIST's Church; it is considered that such, beside a lawful call, should also have a competent knowledge, in order to understand the Scriptures, and outward means of support, and many qualifications of person and mind to make them the more useful for the edification of CHRIST's Body: this may indeed be very true, but after all, the only real good they will effect, will be entirely and alone according to how far they are themselves conformable to CHRIST Crucified, to the pains and labour they are ready to bestow, to spend and be themselves spent for CHRIST's sake. According to this, their office in the conversion of souls will bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold. Nothing will supply the place of this; no knowledge and learning, no powers of body or mind, no great station; nothing but in some way a resemblance to CHRIST Crucified. They must make sacrifices in order to save souls. If the ease and respectability of their condition hinders them from doing this, then it is so far a hindrance to the charge committed to them.

These things are therefore seen most clearly in the Clergy; every one thinks he can see it in them most strongly; that they can do no good to others, unless they are themselves examples of the doctrine of CHRIST Crucified which they teach; that it is in vain in them to preach deadness to the world and contempt of

riches, unless they show it in themselves, and like St. Matthew, before he became an Apostle, forsake all covetous desires, and follow CHRIST, taking up the Cross.

But there is no one who has not some to whom he may do good if he pleases, whom he may bring more to the knowledge of CHRIST; and if he can he ought to do so, and it will be required of him in the great Day. And in this respect the lesson is the same to us all,—that we must not expect to win our brother's soul, excepting in the same manner as CHRIST did, and all His Apostles, namely, by taking trouble,—from a state, as it were, of humiliation and suffering. If we think we are doing good in any other way, we have reason to suspect ourselves, for it is only a shadow of good, and not the reality; we are not putting forth the truth as it is in CHRIST. For CHRIST and His holy Saints, under the teaching of His SPIRIT, show us no other way; there is no instance of any one promoting His Kingdom and converting others, but that somehow or other he bears about in the body the marks of the Cross. And therefore in old times the chief Pastors of CHRIST's flock used to carry a Cross as the sign of their office, showing that by suffering alone did they intend to save the sheep of CHRIST from the devouring wolf. Their Pastor's staff with which they guided and protected their sheep, was no other than their MASTER'S Cross.

To do well and to suffer for it—and to suffer in order that we may do well—this it is which is signified in our bearing the sign of the Cross.

This may be seen in all instances in which good is done, in however humble a manner. Whenever any one suffers for righteousness' sake, in whatever degree, then there is a weight in his words; the world will indeed hate him and persecute him for this; but still, though it be but as a grain of mustard-seed, yet faith, exercised by suffering, will have power. The world will wish and endeavour to drown his small voice, but still it will be heard all the more for that; and it will be in some degree, however slight, like a Voice from the Cross of CHRIST which overcometh the world.

The very Gospel itself of St. Matthew (which we have lately been considering) is an instance of this in the highest manner;—all learned men have remarked the singular humility of this

meek and lowly Publican ; and, as a writer, he is supposed to deliver things with very little order, or method, or skill in writing ; but his words in the HOLY SPIRIT go deeper into the heart, and are of more weight than any thing that has ever been written : because he not only speaks of CHRIST, and by the SPIRIT of CHRIST, but he had himself taken up his abode, as it were, at the foot of the Cross, after leaving the rich place of the Roman Publican at the receipt of custom.

So it is that GOD almost always speaks His great truths to the world by means of persons in suffering : to do GOD's work in the world, to bring forward the great truths of His Church, to convert souls—this is the greatest privilege that can be given to man ; and he must be humbled who has this great privilege given him of GOD, that no flesh may glory in His Presence. If you look into any family, you will generally find, that if GOD's teaching is there, it is mostly through the means of those that suffer—some one on the bed of sickness, or otherwise afflicted,—whom GOD chooses to warn others by their words, and their examples, and their prayers. The words even of a child in sickness are often such as seem to speak to others by the SPIRIT of GOD—such as are deeply felt, and long remembered, and sometimes are known to work for good on their parents.

And this is one of the great blessings of affliction, of whatever kind it be, that not only do they who are afflicted bear the marks of GOD's love, and are chastened for their profit, but they are made thereby the especial instruments of GOD, Who speaks by them when they are made like unto His SON. This was the comfort of the penitent David in the depth of his affliction, that his sorrows might thus work for the good of others ; for after the deepest expressions of penitential sorrow, he exclaims, “ Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee⁸.” It is from the stool of repentance that CHRIST most of all teaches, as in the case of St. Peter, the chief of Apostles afterwards, who himself was converted in bitter weeping before he could strengthen others ; and St. Paul, as he describes himself, was in his preaching “ in weakness and much trembling,” and great “ infirmities.”

⁸ Ps. li. 13.

From these things we may all learn to reflect on some great and important truths. First of all, that if we hope that God may work any good by us in the world, or to the souls of any of our brethren, we must expect HIM to send us trouble and distress; to put on us a Cross, in order that we may be allowed to do His work—in order that we may speak as it were from the Cross, or from bonds like St. Paul; and therefore not to be surprised or impatient if the first poor attempt we make at doing good, is met with perplexity, and opposition, and hard treatment. The first attempt we read of our LORD making to convert His own neighbours at Nazareth, was followed by their taking HIM to a brow of a hill to cast HIM headlong down⁹. And when St. Paul was first called to preach the Gospel, the blessing and encouragement held out to him was, “he is a chosen vessel unto ME,” “for I will show him how great things he must *suffer* for My name’s sake¹.” And not only with regard to ourselves, if we sincerely desire to do good; but with regard to good men whom we love and revere, if we find them unjustly and hardly treated for speaking GOD’S truth in the world, and labouring to bring us all to GOD, then we should not be dismayed at this, as if some strange thing had happened to them, but rather to rejoice in that they are partakers of CHRIST’S sufferings; and to take such afflictions and evil report put on them, as the sign and seal of GOD’S truth. For if they were of the world, the world would love its own; but if the world hates them, this may give us reason to hope that God has chosen them out of the world, and will make use of them to promote His own good purposes.

Secondly, by these reflections we are taught that we must put ourselves to pain and trouble if we wish to do any good to others; and not to think that it ever can be done by the comfortable and easy way which many seem to think. When St. Paul would do good in his own way, then he had only to march with a band of soldiers, to hale men and women to prison, or to look on while St. Stephen was slain; but when he was chosen to do good in GOD’S way—then it was the very opposite to all this: to take his own account, he was “in deaths oft—in stripes, in imprisonments, in labours, in watchings, in fastings².” “Even unto this

⁹ Luke iv. 29.¹ Acts ix. 16.² 2 Cor. xi. 27.

present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands³:" in short, "made the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." That is to say, instead of taking things easy and living in quiet, he put himself to all sorts of trouble, and encountered the greatest dangers.

We do not attempt such great things as St. Paul, and therefore we do not put ourselves to all this danger and hardship; but we must, every one after his degree, put ourselves to trouble in order to do good to those around us, and not expect to be of any use in God's service without it. Every one has parents, or children, or servants, or neighbours, for whose souls he will be answerable, as far as it is in his power to benefit them; and this cannot be done by letting things go on as they otherwise would. Supposing that he has no other opening, no other means of serving them, but by praying for them, yet prayers for the benefit of others must be from a mortified life. I know not how any one can pray aright, even for himself, much less for others, without a considerable degree of pain and trouble; for as it is of all modes of doing good the most effectual, so it is the most difficult. Unless something of fasting or self-denial goes with it, or some chastening of God, it can never be that fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man which availeth much.

Or again, to call our neighbour to account for his faults, and give him serious good advice, as a Christian is bound to do, instead of censuring him to others: this can never be done, to be of any service, unless he that gives is as much pained as he that receives correction; pained under a sense of his own infirmities, and a sympathy and fellow-feeling for his offending brother. For to find fault with another from pride or ill-temper, only increases the evil on both sides; but to speak in humility and charity, is to speak as a prisoner of CHRIST.

In short, to labour for the salvation of others, is the best way to promote our own salvation; and this can only be done by "bearing about in the body the marks of the LORD JESUS;" i. e. by putting ourselves to inconvenience, and loss—by taking trouble, and by some way or other carrying, as it were, with us the Cross of CHRIST.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 11—13.

SERMON CCCXVI.

ON THE CARE OF EACH LITTLE ONE.

ST. MICHAEL'S DAY.

ST. LUKE xv. 10.

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

THESE memorable words which our LORD adds to each of those two short parables, that of the Lost Sheep, and that of the Lost Piece of Money, set before us in a very striking manner the value of the human soul, as the worth and importance of it is known by those blessed spirits which encircle the throne of God. And not this only, but it likewise affords a lively picture of that Divine charity which watches, even, as it were, at so great a distance, over one single creature. For this love is, doubtless, learned by them at the very fountain-head of Mercy, from the immediate presence of HIM Whose Name is Love; without Whose intimate knowledge and care not a sparrow falleth to the ground; and by Whom all the hairs of our head are numbered.

And, now, on these words very much might be said to each person respecting the inestimable value of his own soul; that although it appears to be no great object of concern to him, yet that there are beings who see the Face of God, who love us more than we love ourselves, who think more of our ways of going on than we do, are more concerned respecting our final welfare than we are ourselves: that not only is CHRIST seeking for each one of us, but they also are watching over us together with HIM.

Now this surely is a very moving reflection to lead any one to repentance.

But, on the present occasion, I would only observe what we may learn from this instance of angelic charity, and from this circumstance which causes joy in Heaven over one single soul here below. It has been well said, that among mankind we may learn a person's character from his pleasures and pains; if we know what most pleases any one, or most of all gives him pain, we shall know upon what his heart is set; for one man rejoices at one thing, and another at something else, according to his disposition. Now this we may apply to the Angels of God, we know not what makes up their blessedness, for it is infinitely beyond the thought of man, excepting in this one thing, that they rejoice together with CHRIST over one sinner that repenteth. And of CHRIST HIMSELF when upon earth, although we read often and in many ways of His sorrows at the sins of men, yet once only do we read of His rejoicing; and the subject of that was, that His FATHER in Heaven was revealing HIMSELF to little ones—to babes—to meek and humble penitents. His joy upon earth was to bear back a lost soul to the fold.

True charity, therefore, shows itself over one person, is interested about even one, as if there was only one in the world. Such was the love of JESUS CHRIST which HE showed upon earth. If we attend to the account of His life, we shall find that His tender compassion and care was generally exercised, from time to time, about some particular person. So it was when HE sat so long conversing with the woman at the well of Samaria, knowing so well all her past life, her thoughts, her desire to know the CHRIST whenever HE should come; HE talked with her alone; for she was no stranger to HIM, although HE was entirely a stranger to her, and she had never seen HIM before; until he had kindled in her a desire after that Living Water which never faileth: and when His disciples came to HIM, and wondered that he talked with the woman, it was as if HE said to them, "Rejoice with ME, for I have found My sheep which was lost."

So was it in the miracles that HE wrought, and in the words that HE spoke; they seem generally directed towards one person, such as suited his case; although HE knew that His works and words would reach unto the end of the world, yet His thoughts

seem, as it were, so full of those that were around HIM, as if directed towards them alone. And this, perhaps, was one reason why there was a great difference and variety in His miracles, and His manner of performing them, because HE did them in such a way as the particular case required. And so, also, with His words: one man who earnestly desired to be with HIM, HE told to go home to his friends: another he enjoined to leave his friends at whatever cost, and to come and follow HIM;—to leave the dead to bury their dead; and not to turn back when he had put his hand to the plough. To another, who professed himself eager to follow HIM, HE gave no encouragement, saying, “The SON OF MAN hath not where to lay His head.” Now all this shows that HE had the heart of each person particularly in His eye whenever HE spake: HE attended with a very particular care to the case of each in all that HE said. And thus we may observe, that our LORD spoke in a different manner to His Disciples to what he did to others; and very differently to the Pharisees to what he did to the Publicans: with what peculiar care did HE seem to watch over St. Peter, always knowing what was in his heart, and his faith, and his weakness? And so likewise over Judas Iscariot, even to the last. HE spoke in one way to Martha and in another manner to Mary, who had chosen the good part. Under every variety, with an especial attention to their particular case, did HE speak to Pontius Pilate, and to the Chief Priests, and to the women that lamented HIM, and to the penitent thief upon the Cross. And the same was the case after the Resurrection in all His manifestations. HE walked with those two Disciples going to Emmaus, and conversed with them, as if there were no persons in all the world whose case was such an object of interest to HIM as theirs was: and the same might be said of His appearing to Mary Magdalene on the same morning, who had watched and sought for HIM so earnestly: and so likewise with regard to St. Thomas: before HE appeared to him HE gave him the strongest evidence that could be given by the testimony of all the other Apostles; and when this was not enough, HE gave him all that sensible proof which he had himself desired.

For what is so remarkable in all this is, that it is not with ALMIGHTY GOD as with us, on account of His wonderful knowledge of all His creatures: we, by reason of our very weakness,

and the limited nature of our knowledge, cannot think affectionately of many at once; but with HIM it is very different; for all the hearts, and affections, and thoughts of all men are equally known to HIM; HE careth for all alike; there is no respect of persons with HIM; and yet HE is pleased to show HIMSELF so tenderly alive to the concerns of each; so thoughtful, as it were, of each one; so full of love to each one; as if there were no one else but that one whom HE watched over.

And something of the same kind might be said also of the blessed Angels; for on account of the wonderful extent of their knowledge, we might have thought that one single soul of man on earth could be no great concern to them: while they see millions of worlds, as it were, beneath their feet, and larger than ours, and even here upon earth so many nations, and cities, and villages, and families, how could they out of so many almost innumerable objects, equally important and near to them, care with a particular regard for any one! So we might have thought: and especially when we consider their greatness also, as living in the immediate Presence of GOD, and each endued with strength greater than that of whole armies; and with wisdom far beyond the wisest of men. And yet what are we told? there is joy among the Angels of Heaven over *one* sinner that repenteth. And doubtless the reason of this is because their love is equal to their knowledge—they can love even one soul.

But now the very opposite to this may be noticed in this evil world; as knowledge and wealth increases, men become more and more hard-hearted; and this shows itself especially in not caring for the feelings and wants of particular persons. If we look out into the great world in which we live, and to political matters, there we see large and extensive plans for the benefit of the poor and for schools; and yet, for the most part, carried on with so little charity, so little love and tenderness for the natural or religious feelings of poor and humble people, that a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of CHRIST is worth it all. For while persons are thus engaged in their great schemes, from the temper they show throughout, we cannot but reflect that cases of distress and affliction may lay close to their own doors, nay, may be even within their own houses, and yet they are too

much engaged in great matters to attend to it. Now all this method of being charitable, as it were, by wholesale, and forgetting the feelings of individuals, arises from hardness of heart, and tends also to increase the same ; it is very unlike that Divine charity which is built upon humility, and which makes men like God and His good angels.

Something of the same kind extends to country parishes ; there are large plans of usefulness and doing good which may, indeed, of themselves be necessary and desirable ; but still they remove from our sight the wants and distresses of our brethren, so that we do not feel for them as for our own. Of this kind are the laws for the maintenance of the poor, especially those now in operation, which seem intended to put the poor, as it were, out of the way of the rich. Certainly it is a great charity and blessing in a Christian country for the laws to maintain the poor at all ; but still it must have this effect, that it does not call into exercise true Christian love and compassion. Persons pay the poor-rates generally with as little thought or care for the poor as they do any other rates or taxes : but at the same time it satisfies them in not attending more to the poor, because they thus pay for them. Now surely this system must have a tendency to harden men's hearts ; unless they are in the practice, each in his own station, and according to his ability, of entering into the state of his poor neighbours.

And the Schools also, which are now becoming so general, have in some degree the same effect. Of these, too, it may be said that they are a very great blessing, or remedy, in the state that we are in ; for were it not for religious schools, Christianity itself would be almost disappearing from the country, and many would be brought up without any knowledge of God, and without hope in the world. But still this necessity for schools has only arisen on account of the hardness of men's hearts : if Christians were what they should be, children would be taught religion at home, with far more seriousness and affection than they can be in great numbers at school. How is it possible for those who superintend schools, even with the greatest Christian care and love, to feel so much interest and anxiety about each one committed to them as his own parents ought to have ? Or again, how is it possible for a parent to have that care about the eternal

welfare of his child which he ought to have, and not watch over him, and instruct him from the very earliest dawn of reason? And if this were the case, however much such a child might have to learn at school, he would not have to learn there for the first time the fear of God and the knowledge of His Will. But as it is, as men think that the Poor Laws are to supply every thing to the poor, so they think also that Schools are to afford all that is needful to their children. As things are, indeed, we find it a very bad sign about any family when they do not send their children to school; and those who fall away from school, and are not good enough even for that, are only beginning evil ways which are likely to end in their ruin in this world as well as the next; because, at present, religious schools, *i. e.* schools as far as they have sound religion taught in them, are the remedy which God has given us for the present evil state of things. But surely those who are truly concerned about their children, or young people entrusted to them, will not think that schools are to do every thing for them, nor that which is most essential and important. When young people are about to be confirmed, or are taken with any dangerous sickness, then it often comes to light how very little religion they have had all their lives; how little they have thought of prayer; how little they know of the nature of sin, or are used to serious confession of their faults; but especially how little they have been used to regular habits of devotion. Now schools are not to blame for this: daily or Sunday schools never could teach them all this, which is in fact the very foundation of religion. It can only be taught them by that charity or love which must begin at home, which rejoiceth over one sinner that repenteth, and therefore is very anxious about each one committed more immediately to its charge. Who can be expected to have at heart the eternal interest of a child, if a parent has not? or what can mere words and teaching do alone without example? or indeed what can they do against a bad example?

Now wherever among men there can be joy over a sinner that repenteth, there must be in the same proportion care and concern about a sinner that does not repent, even as in CHRIST HIMSELF; for His anxiety concerning those that repented not was very great, and was the reason why HE rejoiced when HE carried

home the lost sheep rejoicing. For if HE could die such a death for those that were in sin, how must HE have rejoiced over those that were turned from sin? To rejoice, therefore, over one that is found, a person must feel much concern over one that is lost; and will of course search and seek long and anxiously for it until he hath found it. Every one has some one around him for whom he ought to feel this concern more especially; some one whose salvation, humanly speaking, may in great measure depend upon himself. We find in the cure of bodily diseases in the Gospels, that a man's bodily recovery often depended upon the faith of some near relation or friend who came to CHRIST for him. As for example, the Ruler's daughter would not have been raised from the dead, if her father had not come to CHRIST for her. And so does it appear to be the case also with diseases of the soul and spiritual death. GOD, in His unsearchable Wisdom, has so appointed it, that our salvation depends not only upon ourselves, but in some way upon each other; and it may be upon the love which we bear for each other.

Next to our own salvation, surely the greatest object in our life ought to be the care of our brother's soul. Many feel this when their relations or friends are taken from them by death; so that the bitterest part of their sorrow has been, the little good they did them when living; nay, perhaps not only did them no good, but evil. This is found out when it cannot be repaired, and when it can receive but little alleviation, and indeed no relief at all, but in the unbounded mercies of GOD through CHRIST. So, indeed, it is with all with whom we have any intercourse in this our short journey to eternity; they who are most careful to lose no opportunity of doing good to all whom they have to do with, yet will find, when such opportunities are past, much to regret which they might have done and yet did not do. And if this be the case with the very best, what will it be with those who take no thought or care at all for the good of others; who, by their unruly tempers, their pride and uncharitableness, or other bad passions, do harm to those around them, instead of good? Surely this is the case with very many who now hear me. It so happens in this life that such opportunities are given to us continually, and then for ever taken from us, not only by death,

but by many other circumstances : persons are placed in connexion with each other for a time, and then are for ever separated ; servants and masters ; fellow-servants, fellow-labourers, fellow-travellers ; schoolmasters and children put under them ; clergy and their flock ; and numberless other relations of this kind occur for a time, and then are at an end for ever. And on looking back on such connexions while they lasted, all thoughtful persons must feel much how valuable such opportunities have been ; how quickly they pass by, and leave nothing remaining, but the good or evil which has been done while they lasted. Who is there among us who is not at this very time placed in some connexion of this kind with particular persons, which connexion will soon be at an end, even in the common order of events ? Even already such things out of number are occurring, which are like rehearsals, or preparations, or shadows going before, of the last and great separation. Even now two women are grinding at a mill, of whom one shall be taken and the other left ; two men in a field, of which one shall be taken to some other employment, and the other left in the same. Now all these changes are, I say, to a thoughtful person matter of serious thought. You are with some person to-day, and depend upon it, if you wish it, you may do him good ; but he will be separated from you to-morrow, and such opportunity will for ever have gone by.

I am here speaking only of those common changes of life which occur from persons, by God's ever-watchful Providence, being brought together for a time, and then separated. But much more serious are those separations when occasioned by death : and some connexions there are, and relationships, which are only broken by death ; as of husbands and wives, and in some respects parents and children, and all near relations and dear friends. When one is taken away for ever, and the other is left to reflection, what must his thoughts be even in this world, if his heart be not altogether hardened by the deceitfulness of sin ? How many hours, how many days, how many weeks or months will he call to mind, wherein the thoughts of one or of both were taken up by some evil temper, which not only must have hindered all good, but must have done irreparable evil to one if not to both ? Or if not by sour and bad temper, yet by some undue

affection or passion, or some trivial and vain pursuit, how have such golden opportunities for doing good to each other slipped away, and left no good behind, but evil? But more especially is this the case from any unkindness between neighbours; for mutual love it is which opens the hearts of men to receive good from each other: distrust, and coldness, and evil suspicion, these stop the little good that any one can do to his neighbour, and thus make him to lose the little time he has for doing good. And this consideration of itself should make us very desirous to cherish in our hearts that charity which "hopeth all things," and "thinketh no evil,"—that it is the very key to the heart of our neighbour. We are little likely to win over those to God whom we do not love; and we cannot love those whom we do not in some way or other think well of. Now I merely speak of this charity as very valuable to us, in order to seize the opportunities of good which are daily given us, and daily taken away for ever from us; for without this charity we can never avail ourselves of such opportunities. And these opportunities must occur to us day by day, in every variety, with every sort of difference; and therefore the daily disposition of our own heart and temper is the only way of availing ourselves of them.

It may be that men are only made companions to each other for a short journey through the country, and then see each other no more; it may be in working together for a few months, it may be for a year, or it may be for many years, or for life: but it is all in this respect the same thing, that they are all opportunities given unto us by the ALMIGHTY DISPOSER, for no other purpose in the world but that of doing something towards the salvation of each other; and they are all occasions which must make serious men reflect a little on what is past. And what I would notice is, that they all are forerunners of that awful time of reflection which will take place at our great separation from all opportunities of good in this world; when, after being released from the body, we shall have to look back on all opportunities that are past, and on the great Judgment approaching. Whatever separations may have occurred upon earth, at that time we shall all meet again. And blessed beyond all thought will be the blessedness of him who can then know what the joy of angels is; and in meeting again some fellow-traveller of this

his earthly pilgrimage, will be able to take part in the joy of his SAVIOUR, when HE shall say, "Rejoice with ME, for I have found My sheep which was lost." At that time, when all things which have occurred upon earth shall be brought to light, how happy will he be who finds that there is some one among those blessed spirits who would not have been there, had it not been for his own prayers, his own advice, his own example, and Christian love for his brother's soul.

SERMON CCCXVII.

SAINTS' DAYS OF OUR CHURCH.

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

“Looking unto *JESUS*, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

ON this ancient Festival it may not be amiss to say something respecting our keeping holy these days of Saints and Martyrs. And, first of all, let us consider the case as it comes before any humble-minded Churchman; his first enquiry will be, what is the judgment of his own Church respecting these days? what has it always been? and then, what was the case in all early Churches throughout the world? Now the authority for our observance of them is precisely the same in kind, though not, of course, in degree, as that for our keeping the *LORD'S* Day, and for our maintaining public worship. With regard to the mode in which that authority comes down to ourselves, and from which, more particularly, our obligation arises, the case is this:—We find these Festivals in our Prayer Book; we find them placed on the same footing as our ordinary Sundays; so as to leave it a matter undecided, in the case of their happening together, which is to have the preference. The Holy Communion is prescribed to us, and its office appointed on these days as well as on the *LORD'S* Day. The Canons require that scholars should be taken to their parish

Church on Holy and Festival days. Add to which the devotional writers of our Church, in explaining the Fourth Commandment, as extending to the life of a Christian, whether in prayer or for self-examination, generally consider it as applicable to these days appointed by the Church as well as to the first day of the seven : they look upon the obligation which flows from that Divine and eternal command to embrace both, as sacred ordinances of religious worship. If we trace these services of our Church beyond the last changes which they have undergone, we find them still existing on these days ; with one circumstance which should rather increase than diminish the value of those that remain, that some have been lost by the way, as the Festival of St. Mary Magdalene, omitted in the Second Book of King Edward ; that of our LORD'S Transfiguration, before that time ; and the beheading of St. John the Baptist ; and the Festival of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Beyond this period, if we continue to trace them up as far as ancient Liturgies will carry us back, we find these Festivals still observed with their appointed services. And if, beyond these early dates, we cannot follow them up to primitive sources, and they become lost to our view, it is in *the same manner* that the history of the LORD'S Day is as substituted for the Jewish Sabbath. Nor do we find any express and positive command for either ; neither are written in tables of stone by the finger of God.

But we find in the very earliest ages, that Festivals were held in honour of the Martyrs ; and, indeed, it is thought that St. Paul, in this Epistle, speaks in allusion to the martyrdom of St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, whom the Apostle exhorts them to keep in memory, when he says, " Remember them who have spoken unto you the Word of God : whose faith follow ¹." Early in the second century, mention is made of the Church of Antioch celebrating the martyrdom, or, as it was usually called, the birthday of St. Ignatius, that early Bishop and Martyr ; and the Church of Smyrna, afterwards, that of St. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John. And it seems unreasonable to suppose, that, at this early period, they should be holding in honour these martyrs, and not equally celebrating the sacred deaths of St. Andrew and

¹ Heb. xiii. 7.

St. Peter, and those other saints whose Festivals our Church holds, and of whom alone we have now to speak. Tertullian too mentions the oblations which were made on these anniversaries ; adding, " If of these and similar observances you demand a law from the Scriptures you will find none ; but you will be told, that they are founded on tradition, confirmed by custom, observed by faith."

From that period down to the Reformation we have the fullest evidence of the observations of such Festivals, especially by sermons written on those occasions, from the days of St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, and St. Chrysostom, and others in succeeding ages down to the present time. From whom we learn these particulars ; that, as St. Chrysostom observes, " On such occasions there was a general Communion of the whole Church, partaking of the Holy Eucharist." The same writer speaks strongly of the blessed effects resulting from the observation of these days ; and St. Augustin of the great numbers and the devotion of those who filled the Church on such occasions. From both of them it appears, that the example of the martyrs was the great subject of their exhortations ; that, in short, as St. Paul had said of himself, that they should follow them as far as they were followers of CHRIST. They say, moreover, that it was not the martyrs they celebrated, but our LORD as manifested in them ; that as St. Basil says, " By their disposition towards those of His fellow-servants, who had been approved, they should show forth their good will towards our LORD HIMSELF." From the same person's letters we find, that they were days when friends met together from a distance. We also find that they were occasions of bounty and entertainment to the poor. We find incidentally, as from the Sermons of St. Augustin, that some of these were the same days which we now observe, such as St. Stephen's, and the day of the Holy Innocents. Nor does there appear, I believe, generally speaking, any occasion to doubt it in the case of others.

If, therefore, martyrs of a later date were thus held in memory, much more may we suppose were those whom we celebrate. And even were it not so, it proves that the observance of such Festivals is a Catholic custom ; and that each Church may appoint for itself those whom it will hold in honour.

But it cannot be necessary, in speaking to Churchmen, to

adduce proofs respecting an obligation which the Church has imposed upon us. And, indeed, it is painful to be dwelling on evidences in a place where nothing ought to be said but what has a tendency to make us practically better. For not only is it the case, that the laws of the Gospels, being appeals to the heart, do not come to us in the form of palpable, and, as it were, demonstrative proof; but even to be searching after and bringing forward evidence in the case of clear obligation and positive duty, introduces at once a wrong frame of mind,—a wrong attitude, so to speak, of the soul towards the fulfilment of the duty, as of one questioning the authority of a command when his duty is to obey. And thus it is, that while “the wise and prudent” are disputing, *the meek* are possessing the promised inheritance, and *the poor in spirit* have the Kingdom. So wonderful is the law of Christian perfection revealed “unto babes,” the law put in the inward parts, and written in the heart; the “eyes that see their teachers, and ears that hear a word behind, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;” “the highway,” that “shall be called, The way of holiness,” which “the unclean shall not pass over; but it shall be for those: the way-faring men,” they, we may suppose, that would run the way of God’s commandments, “however simple, shall not err therein².” Obedience, therefore, is our blessed privilege, and love is the crown of obedience, and the care of discipline: if others dispute, let us obey; and our obedience shall be their light.

But respecting the mode of keeping these sacred Festivals, and the degree of observance they require of us, it may be necessary to say something. With regard to the latter, indeed, the Church seems to have decided for us by making no distinction between these days and the Lord’s Day; and with regard to the mode of observing them, a great deal is suggested to us by nature itself, as shown by the very heathens, for even they used to celebrate religious days with rest and worship; but in points which are to us sanctified and raised, and blessed and realized by Christianity. That bounty and liberality to those that need, and those offices of lovingkindness to all men, which form, obviously, one part of our duty on such days, are the natural suggestions of a grateful

² Isaiah xxxv. 8.

heart, which has any sense of those mercies which such days bring to mind; and are expressions of that charity which Holy Scripture has marked as the best keeping of Sabbatical days. There are two other duties besides this of Christian liberality prescribed by our own Hooker as suitable to the keeping of Festivals, viz. Rest and Thanksgiving. But Rest is sometimes considered to be appropriate to the one day in seven in a manner wholly different to what it is to any other Festival. This opinion is sanctioned by the law and custom of the land, which requires cessation from toil on that day only, being founded on that Rest so strictly enjoined on the Jewish Sabbath. But it must be remembered, that the Festivals of the Jews were not confined to their Sabbath; and to make our LORD'S Day no more than the ancient Sabbath only, were indeed to fall back from our high Christian privileges to Jewish bondage; to that which was but the shadow of good things to come, of which the substance is CHRIST³.

Our Blessed SAVIOUR has HIMSELF taught us in what way we may best keep the Eucharistic Rest, the Christian Sabbath; namely, in doing the work of GOD, and in exercises of love. These offices are as expressive of the temper suitable to these days, as to the first and best of the seven. Separation from worldly care, suspension of daily labour, ease from the curse of Adam and the sweat of our brow, is of course implied in this rest, with which we would wish to entertain every Festival. But even the rest of Heaven hereafter consists not in a cessation from all employment, for in one sense they "rest not day and night," praising God. To exchange earthly for Divine employment, at the call of our Church, should not be considered as an irksome task, an inconvenient interference, but a happy privilege, which we receive, and thankfully pass on so sacred a custom.

And with regard to the third point which is required in order to celebrate these Festivals, that of praise and thanksgiving. This employment of the first and blessed day of the seven extends to these days also, as it needs must do, but after a different manner. Did we on these Festivals commemorate men only, and on that day "the LORD from Heaven," "the Sun of righteousness" arising from the grave "with healing in his wings;"—did we

³ Col. ii. 17.

on the Sunday hold in honour the beginning of the New Creation, wherein we are all born anew as heirs of immortality;—and on the former nothing more than a fellow mortal who had finished his course with joy, and has been taken to Heaven;—then, indeed, were there no comparison whatever between the two cases, and the one might well depart into neglect and insignificance, as the star before the light of the sun. But it is to the Glory of CHRIST alone that these days are consecrated; it is His Glory alone that shines through them. “As often,” says St. Augustin, “as we celebrate the martyrdoms of the Saints, so often do we declare the praises of our SAVIOUR; and as often as we set forth their sufferings do we preach the Glory of CHRIST. For it is not what they suffered that we look to, but HIM for Whom they suffered, that we contemplate with wonder.” On these days we celebrate the Mercies of GOD, no less than on the day of our LORD’s Resurrection, but those Mercies in a manner peculiarly touching and affecting ourselves; it is JESUS CHRIST manifested in and showing favour unto our own brethren. What a living and intense interest this awakens we know from the New Testament;—to see creatures like ourselves beholding HIM, coming into visible connexion with HIM, and sharing His favours. For it is not our LORD only Whom we contemplate in the Gospels, but those who approached His gracious Person and partook of the blessings that went forth from HIM. With St. Andrew and St. Peter, with the Centurion and the Canaanitish woman, we feel a human sympathy, looking on them as situated like ourselves towards the LORD of Life, Who is no respecter of persons. With a higher sympathy also do we proceed along with them as entering into Glory, as having fought the good fight and received the Crown. In these, therefore, we celebrate the same LORD as on Sunday, but in particular relation to ourselves, as evidencing His love in our fellow-creatures, and giving us in them an earnest of His power to support us also. We are made practically to feel, to act as if we felt, and to realize that Great Article of our Faith, —the Communion of Saints. On other Festivals we commemorate our LORD in His Birth, in His Manifestation, in His Coming to Judgment—in these His Indwelling in each of His Members.

And great are the benefits to be expected, with GOD’s blessing, from a devout observance of them. The strong need of them is

shown in this, that wherever the voice of the Church reaches not, and religious feeling is kindled,—the want is supplied by “Revivals,” as they are called, and various irregular meetings. These efforts, therefore, of our nature, the Church raises and sanctifies, disciplines and sustains by these Festivals; correcting and chastening them by a close connexion with Fasts also.

Joy and sorrow must be ever our lot below,—one following the other at greater or less intervals, by the very constitution of the human mind; joy and sorrow are, humanly speaking, the instruments of our conversion or our sanctification. The Church has by these things done all to make our joys holy joys, and our sorrows holy sorrows; it has brought in one as a relief to the other.

On the days of humiliation, we lament our sad failings; we consider the gathering loads of our guilt; we count over misdeeds and miscarriages, making up beforehand the sad reckoning of most certain and unavoidable judgment, and familiarize ourselves to look death in the face. Well may we sink and faint under such contemplations, if confined to such only. But on these happy days, we rest and find respite from that sad sight; we contemplate the graces which God has revealed, not in ourselves, but in His Saints; we behold them beckoning us to their own peaceful Rest; we think of prayers answered, of sins forgiven, of God's good SPIRIT returning to us. It is very true that there is no keeping Festival without Fast also; that there is no walking with CHRIST on the day of His Resurrection unless we are at His Cross also on the day of His humiliation. And “woe to those Christians,” as good Bishop Wilson says, “who know not what it is to fast even when the Church requires!” But the Church requires us also to keep her Festivals; this is no less necessary to form the Christian character than the other, and, strange as it may appear, it requires no less self-denial than the other. If the one conduces to a mortified spirit and religious fear, the other does also to form the temper of cheerful hope and charity: a self-denying steady habit of encouraging glad hope on such days will have a great effect on the whole character.

Christian charity being the love of ALMIGHTY GOD, extends to the members of CHRIST in HIM, and is especially exercised on these days. Reverence and love for holy characters, and all

respecting them, is inseparable from the love of Holiness ; with it it grows and strengthens with its strength. But this feeling is exalted and hallowed when it approaches our LORD HIMSELF, in beholding those who are collected around His sacred Person. That our Church would thus have us consider them, as lights attendant on our LORD, and deriving their radiance from HIM, is shown by the Christmas Saints' days gathering as they do together like constellations around the Head of the Infant SAVIOUR of the world—shining with His Light ; and afterwards throughout the year scattered about His path. It may be observed that they mostly occur about the same time of the month as Christmas day in all months of the year.

And, indeed, there are some great advantages which we may thankfully acknowledge, in that we have not, like other Churches, Saints and Martyrs of a later date, but none other than this sacred company,—for in these cases the individual is lost in the radiance of our LORD's nearer Presence ;—they are, moreover, the objects of His own choice, His own beloved few ;—whereas in those who are nearer to our own times, we may judge by our own low and fallible standard ; add to which, how do they become connected and associated with party feelings or partialities ! Even our Martyrs, alas ! have died by the hands of those who bear the Christian name. But here, as in all other matters, we breathe a purer atmosphere in dwelling on primitive days. Here is nothing to excite a prejudiced feeling or controversial principle ; here is there nothing to disturb the harmony of these days wherein we are called upon to “ rejoice and be glad.” Were they Martyrs of our own Church only, or Saints of a later age, partial affection might afford them an undue value in our eyes ; there would be more in it that is earthly ; or delicacy for their own sakes might have suggested that they would rather have been hidden from our view. But not so with those whom Holy Scripture itself hath held forth to us. Here again, we realize not one article of our faith only, “ the Communion of Saints,” but another, “ the Holy Catholic Church ” also. For here, with other Churches throughout the world, we may harmonize and agree : cold must be that heart which kindles not at the thought of this bond—of the same Saints, the same lessons of instruction and words of Scriptural meditation. Blessed days that unite us, though

but in thought! happy signs that remain, however feeble, of those days when all CHRIST'S Church was one; and lead on our hopes to those happier times when "All nations and languages, people and tongues"¹ before the throne, shall lift the voice of one song, and the same words! The memory of these Apostolic men, and early Saints and Martyrs, is still blessed below, their names divide not the world, but in them is fulfilled the solemn prayer of our LORD for Union, that "they may be one as WE are ONE."

While others would attempt to form imaginary bonds of Unity, and inculcate that Charity which GOD loves not, and blesses not, which is not on "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets" which HE hath laid, let us learn their spirit by practising their ways, remembering them always more stedfastly from combining their memories with times and seasons. Unity of principle and of practice is the strongest bond of union; they who love and exercise themselves in these things will be knit in heart to those who do the same—though they know not why; to those at home, to those abroad, "building up themselves on their most Holy Faith, praying in the HOLY GHOST," and in the unity of the SPIRIT; united also with those who are with GOD, and who on such days are used to be in solemn mention at the Altar. In the meek fulfilment of these quiet duties let there be no moderation,—for he who worships best and most earnestly,—and obeys most dutifully, enters most into the inner temple where GOD is; and there drinks of that Divine love, for "GOD is love." He who is the most zealous in the performance of these duties will be the most truly charitable; and, being most humble, most tolerant of the errors of others; and he will fear always, for where GOD is, there must be the fear of HIM.

If habits of devotion are the perfection of the Christian, how can these be better supported than by the help of time and season? and if such devotion is to be kindled by contemplation, how is heavenly contemplation more assisted than by having set before us living examples in which those graces are set forth? "One star differeth from another star in glory;" they differ in themselves, and in their distances from us;—they differ in colour as well as degrees of brightness. GOD'S nature is infinite, and so is

¹ Rev. vii. 9.

every thing that partakes of HIM; no countenances, no flowers, in the natural world, and no two Saints are found alike. A different grace and virtue is set before us in each. Fortitude in St. Stephen; love in St. John; earnestness in St. Peter; watchfulness in St. Andrew; in St. Matthew, freedom from covetousness; in St. James the Less, holy severity; in St. Bartholomew, guilelessness; in St. Luke, mercifulness; in the Baptist, mortification; in St. Paul, forgetfulness of self; in St. Barnabas, renunciation of worldly goods; in St. James the Great, a desire to be hid with GOD: in the blessed Virgin, purity of heart. "But all these worketh that One and the self-same SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as HE will." Among those Saints of GOD which are solemnly recorded in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, in every one, in various shapes, faith is tried, but in each, with circumstances perfectly different; a different character, different temptations, a different course; each bears his own Cross, differing from that of another; each one may furnish to us lessons of Wisdom.

This is the "cloud of witnesses" with which we are encompassed day by day, in running the race that is set before us: they behold us in the midst of the same trials which they once underwent; with the same propensities to evil which they overcame; and with the same difficulties and temptations from without, besetting our path; and the same LORD to look to, as "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

In the meanwhile, for a short time, we are hurried from scene to scene, from hope to fear, from fear to hope, by an awful Hand that we see not; and then we are suddenly taken one by one away to appear before that Eye which has most narrowly watched us all the while, though we thought not of it.

SERMON CCCXVIII.

FEAST DAYS OF THE APOSTLES.

ST. LUKE xvii. 28, 29.

“Ye are they which have continued with ME in My temptations.

“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My FATHER hath appointed unto ME.”

IF there is any one whom we greatly revere and love, we are particularly desirous to know what passes between him and his most intimate friends.

But it is for far higher reasons that we feel a very great interest in learning what took place between our Blessed LORD and those chosen few who shared His most intimate society in the flesh; and not only that, but who were commissioned, as it were, to stand in His own place upon earth, when HE departed from it—His own Apostles and Disciples.

And it so happens, that a great part of what we read in the Gospels is the account of what thus occurred, not publicly before all the people, but privately between our LORD and these, His chosen companions, and, as HE was pleased to call them, His friends. It is, indeed, highly interesting and instructive to trace out how our Blessed LORD dealt with them; the manner in which HE first drew them to the society and knowledge of HIMSELF; the different ways in which HE dealt with each of them according to their characters; His long forbearance with them in their ignorance

and slowness of faith ; His gradual preparation of them for the high trust HE was about to commit to their charge ; and many other particulars, which will from time to time occur to us as we trace out the account of His gracious intimacy with them.

Now that part of the history which we are chiefly apt to notice, is the first call of the disciples, when, as we read, HE saw them—four of them—mending their nets on the sea-shore, for they were fishermen ; these were St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. James the Great, whom we commemorate on this day, and John, the beloved disciple. There is also another of whose calling we read, when he was engaged in his lucrative occupation, by the same lake, as a tax-gatherer—Matthew the Publican. Of all of which it is said, that when HE called them, they forsook all, and followed HIM.

But then we are not to suppose, that when they thus instantly obeyed the call, and followed our LORD, that they saw HIM now for the first time. For St. John tells us in his Gospel, how it was that they first became acquainted with our LORD ; it was not in this their native country of Galilee,—but in Judea, many months before, when they were attending on the teaching of John the Baptist ; and John pointed out to them the LAMB OF GOD. Indeed, they were at that time themselves disciples of the Baptist—true disciples, no doubt, practising repentance, and made fit to see the Salvation of GOD. Andrew and John then went and stayed the whole day with our Blessed LORD, and the next day brought Peter also to HIM. St. Philip also and Nathanael were at the same time made acquainted with our LORD, and acknowledged in HIM the great power of God.

After this occasion, we read of the disciples being with CHRIST at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, where the water was made wine. So that, before they were called at the lake of Galilee, they were made fit for our LORD by His forerunner, the Baptist ; and they had themselves witnessed His miracles, and been partakers of His heavenly instructions. It was in consequence of all this that they were so ready to obey His call, and to give up all things for His sake.

Another circumstance we must also remember with regard to this calling, that it was not on this occasion, when they were summoned to attend HIM, as HE found them by the lake, that they

were appointed to be Apostles, but only disciples ; for an Apostle means one sent forth to teach ; but a disciple, only a follower. It was some time afterwards that our LORD appointed them Apostles or Ministers of the Gospel. We read, that HE went up into a mountain, and spent the night in prayer ; and when it was day, HE called for the disciples, and out of them HE appointed twelve to be Apostles. And some time afterwards, He sent forth also seventy other persons to prepare the way before HIM. Thus did our LORD constitute the three orders in His Church, as it had been of old in the law of Moses, and as it has been ever since in the Church ; for HE HIMSELF was as the Bishop, and His Apostles as the Priests ; and the seventy, who were afterwards sent forth, as the Deacons, or the third order.

But it was with these twelve Apostles that our LORD lived more especially in the closest intimacy, during His earthly ministry. We may observe, that many of His discourses were addressed to them alone ; such as the explanation of those parables which HE had delivered in public to the multitude ; and the account of the end of the world, and the day of Judgment, in the latter part of St. Matthew's Gospel, which seems to have been to only four of the Apostles. And the appointment of the Holy Communion, and all the heavenly discourses which our LORD delivered on that occasion, were only in the presence of the twelve. So many of our LORD's words upon earth were only delivered to these favoured few.

And not only discourses, but some of the miracles also, seem only to have been done for the sake of some of the Apostles. Such was that miraculous draught of fishes recorded by St. Luke ; such was our LORD's walking on the sea, and quieting the storm, and withering the barren fig-tree by His Word, and, probably, many others. And these miracles were doubtless not only a proof of our LORD's Power, but also a kind of teaching like the parables. What lesson, for instance, ever could have taught them trust in CHRIST for their bodily sustenance and support, when they gave up all things for His sake, so powerfully as that miracle of the fish that were taken at His Word ? What could have set before them in so lively a manner as that miracle did, their great calling as fishers of men,—that ministry whereby the souls of men were to be brought into that Church, which was to

depend altogether on His Word, and the power of His Almighty Grace, by means of which they would succeed at last? What, again, could have fixed on their hearts and memory so deeply the heavy judgment which our LORD was going to show on guilty Jerusalem, as that destruction of the fig-tree? In like manner we may observe, that our LORD's miracles all contained some lesson of instruction. And thus did HE graciously lead them by little and little to trust in His power, and believe in HIM, preparing them for the great trials they were to undergo; and even now, no doubt, great were the trials and difficulties which encompassed them, from the malice and persecution of the Jews, in following their despised and hated MASTER. In all these things, we can see how tenderly and carefully our LORD was training and teaching them; like as an eagle who takes her young ones on her wings, and by little and little teaches them to fly; to which the holy Moses has likened this gentle dealing of ALMIGHTY GOD¹. And thus we find that our LORD sent them forth on a mission to preach and heal the sick in His Name, without purse or any provision for their journey, in order to show them how miraculously and carefully HE would sustain them. And to this circumstance HE afterwards alluded, when HE was going to leave them; HE appealed to them, and asked them if it had not been the case, that when thus sent forth in need of all things, they had actually wanted nothing to supply all their necessities. But then, when HE was going to leave them, and their faith was confirmed,—HE told them that they must provide themselves with all these things, having the same faith in HIM, but taking natural means for their support like other Christians².

Indeed, much of our LORD's conduct in the Gospels, appears to have been intended for this gradual training of the Apostles, dealing gently with them until they were able to undergo greater trials. Thus we find that the great part of our LORD's ministry consisted in His flying from place to place, to avoid the persecution of the Pharisees, who were bent on killing HIM; so that His life itself, as well as His death, appears to have been a living sacrifice. Thus it was during the last year of His life especially; HE fled

¹ Deut. xxxii. 11.

² Luke xxii. 35, 36.

from Capernaum to the heathen places of Tyre and Sidon; and from thence HE was obliged to avoid the places where the Pharisees were. HE kept aloof from them, and passed from one place to another, on the Gentile side of the lake of Galilee³. Now this state of persecution in which our LORD lived must have been a great trial to His disciples; for doubtless the Pharisees sore beset them, and left no means untried to set them against their lowly MASTER; and this they did, not only with threats of violence against HIM, but denouncing HIM with a great show of learning and worldly authority. It was in the midst of all this our LORD's continual flight from His enemies, and about six months before our LORD's death, we read that HE was in the parts of Cæsarea Philippi; where HE appears to have led His disciples far out of the reach of their malicious enemies. And then HE asked Peter, what HE appears never before to have told either him or any of His disciples, namely, who HE was; "But whom do ye say that I am?" And when St. Peter confessed that HE was in very deed the CHRIST, the promised MESSIAH,—and the very SON OF GOD; then our LORD blessed him, and, doubtless, all the other Apostles and Christians who believed this truth in him; and said that this faith was revealed to him of the FATHER; and that on this as on a Rock HE would build His Church. Then did HE at once begin to teach them of His sufferings; no less than nine times after that did HE tell them of His approaching Crucifixion and death, of which, HE had never ventured to speak to them before. And not only this; but immediately, as it would appear, after this confession of belief in HIM did our LORD go *own* boldly into the midst of His enemies; for we read no more of His going to the parts of Tyre and Sidon, or of Magdala; but on that day week HE was transfigured before them on Mount Tabor, in the midst of Galilee; and HE afterwards sends forth the seventy to proclaim HIM aloud in the cities where HE would go HIMSELF; whereas before that HE had ever been hiding HIMSELF from them. And this shows that it was especially for the disciples' sake that HE thus withdrew HIMSELF; for now that they had come to know HIM to be GOD, HE seems to think them equal to withstand all things; to be firm as a rock

³ Mark vii. 24—31; viii. 10—12.

on this Faith against the storms of the world. Now HE “set His face stedfastly,” it is said, “to go to Jerusalem,” knowing the things that should befall HIM there; and teaching His Apostles more and more not to be offended at those His sufferings.

But we shall find, that although our LORD thus brought them by degrees to the full knowledge of HIMSELF and of His spiritual kingdom, yet HE never, like an earthly teacher would do, gave them any flattering hopes of ease or honour in this world; on the contrary, from the beginning HE always told them, that they were to expect persecution and suffering—as in His last affectionate discourse, when HE speaks so much of His love to them, and His Divine union with them, and of the promised Comforter—yet throughout HE taught them, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.”

We may also observe, in tracing out our LORD’s conduct to them, that HE dealt with each, and disclosed HIMSELF to each, more or less, according to what each of them was. And, indeed, HE appears to have given them different places in His regard, or attendance on HIMSELF. Thus St. Peter seems to have been first in authority; St. John first in the love of his LORD. St. James stood also very high in his LORD’s favour, for some reason, and in some way we are not told; but he seems equal, or nearly so, with Peter and John. Next to these seems to be St. Andrew, who, on several occasions, seems full of watchfulness on our LORD’s conduct. And then next to these, and in some things, St. Philip seems to be one to whom our LORD appeals. Perhaps each of the disciples, in some respect, had marks of favour and particular gifts. In one thing, Judas Iscariot, who became the traitor, seems to have had the first place or pre-eminence, that is, in the care of their worldly goods, keeping “the bag,” that is, all the money and property of this little company. In this worldly covetous age many would think this the first and best place of all, to have trust and authority in matters of money. But our LORD showed how much HE valued money by giving the care of it to the traitor Judas; and has set before us a very dreadful and sad warning, and, perhaps, prophecy also, to indicate that the sin and temper of Judas will be found in His Church to the last, even among its ministers.

Now the chief consideration which makes our LORD’s conduct to the twelve disciples so interesting to us is, because we see

therein so palpably what our LORD's dealing, probably, is with ourselves. We make a great mistake when we look upon persons whom we read of in the Gospel, as if they were another order of beings to ourselves—as if they were not, under the circumstances, treated very much as ourselves. Indeed, I do not know any consideration that appears so awful, so much calculated to throw us each upon himself, with a very anxious desire to set himself in good earnest to flee from the wrath to come; and in order to do so, to set about a course of life very different from those around him. Nothing, I say, seems calculated to urge one so much to this as the thought, how much our temptations and dangers are the same as those of the first Christians, and how very different our lives are to theirs. It makes us suspect that there may be something more fatally wrong about us than we are inclined to suppose, while we compare ourselves with other people in these easy times. For there seems every reason to believe, that even among us, in these latter days, there may be some one like Judas, with as great advantages as he had, and yet no better, in the eyes of GOD, Who is no respecter of persons. And also there may be—i. e. there is nothing to hinder why there should not be—one as high in the love of JESUS CHRIST as St. John and St. Peter.

And this our LORD HIMSELF seems to set before us; for, on one occasion, St. Peter said to our LORD, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed THEE; what shall we have therefore³?” To which our LORD replied, “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for MY sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life⁴.” And to this declaration our LORD added those memorable words, “But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” By which HE seems to signify, that although they were the first of all to do these things, yet that, even in the last days of Christianity, among those that would be last of all called into the Church, there might be some who would do the same as they did; and that with so pure and good a heart, as that they might stand among the first in His Kingdom. It was, indeed, fulfilled in those very times, when Judas, who was among the first called, became

³ Matt. xix. 27.

⁴ Mark x. 28, 29.

among the last; and St. Paul, who was the last called, was not "behind the chiefest of Apostles," by his own confession; and "laboured more abundantly than they all." But the words seem also to signify, that these blessed friends of our LORD, though first called, would have no advantage above others with regard to the Kingdom of GOD; but that whosoever did best, and gave up most at any period of the world, should stand the highest. Much to the same effect in the Gospel ⁵ for to-day our LORD says, "That to sit on His right hand, and on His left, was not His to give,"—that is to say, that it was not to be given by any partial choice or election even to those who were with HIM—"but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of MY FATHER."

As the world advances onward to its end, and is getting further and further from the times of the Gospel, it becomes more and more necessary to turn our attention to the holy Apostles; and for that purpose, to pay particular attention to those Saints' days which our Church has appointed to be kept holy.

Life is to us a trial for eternity, as it was to them: we have the same prize to contend for as they had, the same danger of falling; CHRIST is present with us as surely as HE was with them; to teach us, to prove what is in our hearts, to support us from sinking, to warn and encourage. HE speaks to us daily in our conscience, in His Providence, in His Church. Our Blessed LORD has our interest at heart as much as HE had theirs; we are as near to HIM as they. Our trials, indeed, and temptations are far less severe than theirs were; but if in these we fail, what would we have done if we had had to encounter theirs. As it is said in the Prophet, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ⁶?" But a time will come to us all when our great trial shall overtake us—the rain shall descend, as our LORD has said, the floods come, and the winds blow; and every one of us shall be tried, whether we have built on the rock or on the sand; whether we have been in our actions obedient followers of JESUS CHRIST, or only His followers in outward profession.

⁵ St. James the Apostle.

⁶ Jer. xii. 5.

SERMON CCCXIX.

FAST DAYS OF OUR CHURCH.

ST. MATT. vi. 16.

“ Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.”

THERE is, perhaps, no Christian duty more neglected than that of fasting; so much so that, probably, some persons have never considered the obligation at all; and many are hardly aware that the Church has, weekly and yearly, appointed Fasts,—seasons when families and individuals are called upon to afflict their souls: and these it has had ever since the time of the first Christians.

Others may, perhaps, consider the practice as superstitious, and ask, whether Holy Scripture does expressly command it. It is true, that it does not so. Our Blessed Lord, in His wisdom, and the Inspired Teachers of His Word, have not given any express injunction on the subject; neither do they expressly enjoin our meeting together for the purposes of public worship: though Scripture implies, and takes for granted, that we do.

And we must not think that there is any thing in fasting which is of itself pleasing to God—merely and of itself;—for we may fast, and be none the better for it; like the Pharisees of old. But it is a natural expression of repentance, and an instrument which, if properly used, is a most powerful one to a holy life. And though our SAVIOUR has not positively and expressly commanded it, yet what HE says on the subject, implies the necessity of it; for HE has given us directions how we are to fast; which, of

course, implies that we do fast. Moreover, in giving us these directions, HE joins it together with the other two great Christian duties—Prayer and giving of Alms. HE has likewise told us, that our Heavenly FATHER will reward us for it, reward us openly, if we fast in secret, and according to His directions. And this, to every fair and honest mind, is quite equivalent to being an express command.

And though it be likewise true, that the Prophets and Apostles give us no particular and positive injunctions respecting this duty, yet we know it is one which they always practised themselves; this we know of the holy David; of Daniel, the beloved; of Anna, the prophetess; of St. Paul; of St. Peter; of Cornelius, the centurion; of the first Christians, and other remarkable individuals; we know that they fasted and prayed; this we know from the Bible. And, perhaps, the reason why, in its infinite wisdom, it has not given a general and universal command on the subject is, because it is a duty which must be, in a great measure, left to the conscience of every separate individual; and one concerning which we are apt to deceive ourselves; either thinking we do something which is meritorious in God's sight, by so doing, or condemning others who do not the like.

If we turn from the Book of Holy Writ to the other accounts which we have of the Apostles and Saints of old, we find that they all had very strict and severe practices of fasting. And, indeed, it has been the general custom of good men of all ages and countries. Fathers of the Church, as they are called, martyrs and holy men, through the whole period of the Church's history, have always been men of fasting and prayer; as appears, incidentally, in their writings and lives. Add to this, if there has been any instance of Christian primitive piety and purity of life in these latter days, it has generally *been known* to have been accompanied with this practice; and, perhaps, though not known, this has always been the case. And those good Bishops and Pastors of our Church, whose names we must ever love and reverence, are very earnest in pressing it upon all.

Not to insist more strongly on the duty than the case requires, let us consider, in a few words, what may be said of this obligation. First of all, and above all, we have the directions of CHRIST given us respecting the observance; and His sure word of promise,

that our Heavenly FATHER will reward us for it. Secondly, we have the authority of that Church, which CHRIST has HIMSELF established, for it ; and to obey that authority, is of itself a blessed privilege and duty, and will surely be blessed : an authority which, however neglected in these days, will always be a witness against those who do neglect it. In the third place, we have the example, first, of our SAVIOUR HIMSELF, and then of His disciples ; and then of all devout and good men of all times.

And lastly, as a motive to the practice of this important Christian duty, let us consider the great spiritual benefits which are derived from it. These benefits, indeed, are such as can only be known by experience ; and that which is true of every other Christian duty, is especially applicable to this, that “ if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God ¹ ” or not.

Indeed, it is difficult to conceive any true and deep repentance without some kind of fasting, for it is the natural expression of sorrow. “ My heart is smitten.” . . . “ I forget to eat my bread.” A soul deeply affected with a sense of its danger, and the loss of GOD’s favour, cannot be inclined to self-indulgence of any kind. “ Woe unto you that are full,” says our Blessed LORD.

And the more severely we deal with ourselves, the less severely shall we be dealt with. If we humble ourselves, GOD will, in due season, lift us up ; if we judge ourselves, we are assured, we shall not be judged.

Moreover, in addition to its being a necessary part of repentance, it is likewise a great help to self-denial of all kinds ; and, without self-denial, there can be no growing in grace. Thus, for instance, if a person afflicts himself by fasting, and denies himself, occasionally, innocent indulgences, and natural wants, he will be less likely to fall into unlawful indulgences. It is laying the axe to the root of the tree ; that tree whose fruits are bitter, and their end eternal death.

If a person afflicts himself, he will be apt to bear more resignedly, more thankfully, the afflictions which the ALMIGHTY thinks fit to lay upon him ; he will become more spiritually-minded, which, the Apostle says, “ is life and peace ² ;” and will see more

¹ John vii. 17.

² Rom. viii. 6.

clearly the use, the benefit, the blessing of those chastisements, which his Heavenly FATHER thinks fit to lay upon him. Until this godly discipline is restored among us, I fear all earthly means will be in vain to satisfy, or to check, that evil spirit of unbelief which prevails.

But, lastly, the greatest of all benefits to be obtained from the practice of fasting, is as an accompaniment to meditation and prayer; prayer is the secret of a divine life; and the secret of prayer is self-denial. If the holy Daniel and the Apostle St. Peter were admitted into intercourse with the ALMIGHTY when they fasted and prayed; if Cornelius was heard and answered when he fasted and prayed, we may find access to GOD by similar means, and hope for a similar blessing. Fasting and prayer are, as it were, the wings of the soul. If there be any thing which can render the spirit heavenly-minded and stedfast in faith and the love of GOD, and can render prayer effectual, it is fasting. Our SAVIOUR, when speaking of a high degree of Christian faith, says, "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." And there are some evil habits and practices, such as sins of impurity, which, perhaps, can scarcely be overcome but by these means; some degrees of grace, which cannot be obtained unless constantly sought for by prayer and fasting.

But, with respect to this practice, so necessary and so beneficial to every Christian, two cautions are to be observed. The first is, that we do not consider abstinence, or abstaining from food, a duty, which is of itself alone meritorious or pleasing to GOD; but that it is only as an expression of humiliation and sorrow, as I said before, and as an instrument and a means; and that, therefore, it must *always be accompanied* with strict self-examination and repentance. When united with these, it will not fail of piercing the skies, and bringing down a blessing. But without prayer and devotion, it is but "as a lamp without oil." The next caution is one, indeed, not in these times generally necessary to be given, but may be in a particular case, that it be not carried to an undue excess; for, by so doing, it may not only impair the body, but likewise weaken the mind, rendering it a prey to superstitious fancies and over-anxious scruples.

But it may be asked, are the obligations to this duty so general,

so universal, that all persons are alike called upon to observe it? Certainly, Christian charity and Christian prudence would never expect this of the sick or poor. By the poor, I mean such as are with difficulty enabled to support themselves sufficiently for their daily occupation. For it can never be right to render ourselves by these means unfit for the calling in which God has placed us.

But, on this account, shall we say that those persons who, perhaps, most need them, shall lose those great blessings and heavenly benefits which are attached to this practice? Shall we say that this is a duty not incumbent on them? would it not be saying that they are not to avail themselves of these great helps and assistances on the road to Heaven? For it is not only a duty, but, as it were, a spiritual help; a blessed means to make us happier both here and hereafter.—The poor, the sick, the aged, if not able to fast, yet they can avail themselves of those blessings which attend it. If they cannot afflict themselves, yet they are afflicted of God; and if they bear their afflictions thankfully and patiently, it is a more acceptable sacrifice than any thing which can be done by our own will and choice.

Add to this, that if it were true that they cannot fast, yet they can in other ways deny themselves. There is a spiritual Fasting without abstaining from food; there will be some means wherever there is the will of mortifying the spirit, and subduing the pride and sensuality of our hearts: they can deny their own impatient tempers, their own selfish inclinations, looking to HIM Who, even in the very hour of Agony, was willing to endure all the pain of the Cross for our sakes; and refused the wine and the myrrh with which the pity even of His murderers was willing to deaden and to stupify the torture. But HE was willing, and chose rather to suffer all, and to suck out the dregs of the bitter Cup. And shall we call ourselves Christians, and yet neglect so great a duty as this? Shall we not gladly and cheerfully suffer for a little while with HIM, who endured so much for us? Could we in any way suppose ourselves His servants, and yet shrink from those duties by which alone we can be rendered like HIM?

Moreover, let the infirm and the needy not forget the case of the poor widow in the Gospel. She might have pleaded that she had but two mites to sustain her, and, therefore, had nothing to

give in charity;—she might have pleaded this, and, perhaps, might have been excused in so doing;—but she would have lost that gracious testimony which has descended to all ages, that she had cast more into the treasury than all the rich. Let them remember the devout and aged Anna, who, even in extreme old age, at fourscore and four years, yet “served God, night and day, with fastings and prayers,” and was found worthy to behold CHRIST.

But with regard to the particular command of our LORD, that we be not when we fast “as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.” There is doubtless now, as there was then, when the command was first given, and always will be, a great inclination to substitute the outward profession of Religion, in some way or other, for the sincere practice of it. But in the present day, this false show of Religion which we are liable to, is not likely to be in Fasting; on the contrary, it is to be feared — not that people should fast, in order to make a display of it for the praise of men, as the Pharisees did of old, but rather that they should not fast at all, from the fear of man, lest they should be accused of superstition and Popery, and so neglect what they ought to do, from being ashamed of CHRIST, and the precepts of His Gospel.

Nevertheless, from these words of our SAVIOUR, we may learn an invaluable lesson to be applied to our own practice in this particular; viz. that by thus secretly humbling and dealing severely with ourselves, we should learn to bear outwardly, not a false, but a truly cheerful and happy spirit. And this is not the least of the benefits to be derived from the practice of this duty; that it will, if sincerely pursued, be likely to give us an habitual cheerfulness of temper. For if we thus humble ourselves, we shall receive with more resignation what our Heavenly FATHER pleases to bring upon us. And the more harshly we treat ourselves, the more kindly are we disposed to look upon others. To this may be added, that the great foundation for spiritual rejoicing, and the complacency of a heavenly-minded temper, is to be found in spiritual humiliation.

For instance, if we would spend the Sunday as we should do in peace and joy, because it is the day when our SAVIOUR rose from the Dead, and opened to us the Gate of Heaven. Perhaps, we might have no better method of doing so, than in learning weekly

to spend the day of His Sufferings also, as our Ancient Church has appointed, in repentance and godly sorrow, and meditating on CHRIST'S Passion. And this we may do in some measure, whatever our worldly employments may be. We must not expect to share "His Crown of Joy" in this world, or the next, unless we use ourselves to drink of the Cup of His Sufferings.

If we would thus deal strictly and severely with ourselves, according to our Blessed SAVIOUR'S command, we should learn to make our Religion to consist in something more substantial than outward observances or unprofitable notions. We should not find it necessary to withdraw from innocent society, in order to be religious; for the danger is not from without, but from within,—not in these outward circumstances, but in our own heart; if that be diligently and rightly humbled, and watched in secret, we shall be able to live in friendly intercourse with others, without losing our innocence, and without losing what we otherwise might be too apt to do, our Christian charity. Our zeal in the cause of CHRIST and His Religion cannot be too great; but then let this zeal be spent upon ourselves, upon our own manifold imperfections and failings. We shall then have little heart to condemn others. If our Blessed LORD has commanded us not to judge others, that we ourselves be not judged, so His holy Apostle hath also added, that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." So that although to abstain from judging others is a different thing to that of judging ourselves; yet they both so usually go together, that they both have the same effect, in averting judgment from ourselves, that we be not condemned with the world.

If we duly observe either in our families, or each for himself in secret, these weekly and yearly seasons of retirement, of fasting and devotion, we shall derive from them a steadiness and cheerfulness of mind, which will much assist to keep us from falling in our Christian course, and be our best safeguard in an evil world. Cheerfulness, I say, as well as steadiness of mind; for as there is nothing which so fills us with melancholy tempers, as the unmortified desires of our own heart; so there is nothing which contributes more to serenity and peace of mind, than that mortified and subdued spirit which is the fruit of fasting. The truth is this:—that as long as we are in this world, there is a contest

going on between the natural and the spiritual man ; one of these must in the end be victorious. Fasting weakens the power of the natural, and strengthens the spiritual man.

Let us not, therefore, offer up in vain, and as if it were no better than an idle form, that Prayer of our Church with which we approach the throne of Mercy ; praying that—our LORD, Who fasted for us, would give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the SPIRIT, we may obey His godly motions³.

The duty is, indeed, an irksome and a painful one ; but let us not on that account neglect it—it is the root only which is bitter, —the fruits are peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST ; and long suffering and thankfulness in this world ; and an everlasting reward in that which is to come.

The evil heart of human nature will suggest excuses enough against our putting this in practice ; that our health will not allow it ; or our business ; or the loose opinions of the world ; or false religious views.

It is not the will of our GOD and SAVIOUR that we should suffer any pain unnecessarily. This duty, therefore, would never be set before us in the way it is, unless it was very important to our salvation. We are naturally inclined, especially in these days, to dwell on the bright side of Religion ; its blessings and comforts, and to forget its equally merciful duties and mortifications ; but surely, any serious consideration of the certainty of some great eternal change which awaits us, and the uncertainty whether it will be for good or evil, ought to make us very earnest to embrace every thing which may increase our repentance.

This consideration will make us not shrink from fasting, for though it were like cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye, it were very light and tolerable, when compared with that state where the worm dieth not.

The exceeding deceitfulness of the human heart is, perhaps, in nothing more evident, than with respect to these self-denying duties ; as will appear from the manner in which, though fully aware of their great value, and even necessity, yet we still defer

³ Collect for the First Sunday in Lent.

and excuse ourselves from them, under the plea of our health, and other pretences which suggest themselves, as if by the instigations of the evil one, in order to cheat our souls, and keep us from our true happiness. The true reason, generally, is our own disinclination to such duties and spiritual employments; and in this, as in all other matters, if we "love not the truth," God will give us up "to believe a lie."

May I conclude with reverence, with the words of our Blessed SAVIOUR; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

S E R M O N C C C X X .

THE BLESSING OF THE MINISTER.

ST. JOHN XX. 21.

“ Then said JESUS to them again, Peace be unto you: as My FATHER hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

MEN are apt to use to each other words of salutation and good wishes, as the expression, “ Peace be unto you,” in the Old Testament, used by man to man only as a form of salutation. And these are, of themselves, no more than good wishes, for they have no power to bestow what they desire. Very different are the words of JESUS CHRIST; for a word with HIM is the same as the deed; it was His Word only that made the heavens and the earth; whatever HE wills comes to pass; what HE says is done: an expression of good will from HIM is the same as the gift; and that gift far greater than words, and “ passing all understanding.” Thus our Blessed SAVIOUR says, on one occasion, to His disciples, “ Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you.” Not mere words of course; not empty expressions of good will; but real and substantial gifts.

Now these words in the Text, “ Peace be unto you,” we may consider in connexion with those that follow:—“ As MY FATHER hath sent ME, even so send I you.” These are very high and mysterious expressions indeed, that in like manner as JESUS CHRIST had been HIMSELF sent by the FATHER into the world, so also, after some wonderful resemblance, were His Apostles sent by HIM: indeed this was the very point on which all their power depended, because they were “ the Sent ” of JESUS CHRIST; this

the word Apostle signifies, "the Sent." Therefore, we may suppose, that when the Apostles also pronounce Peace in the Name of CHRIST, that these also are not words of course, but that they are in fact CHRIST'S own words, powerful to bestow that which they express. And this is fully declared unto them on another occasion, when, as on the present, the disciples were commissioned to go forth to preach the Gospel, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again¹." To which we must also apply what our SAVIOUR adds on the same occasion: "For it is not ye that speak, but the SPIRIT of your FATHER which speaketh in you."

And according to this, we find that in the Apostle's letters, there are solemn words of blessing; such as to the Thessalonians, "The very GOD of Peace sanctify you wholly: and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." And to the Corinthians, "The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST be with you all. Amen." Sometimes shorter, as, "The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST be with you all. Amen." Or, "The LORD JESUS CHRIST be with thy spirit."

And that they on whom the Apostles pronounced the blessing, did in reality receive the blessing, as if it had been pronounced by our LORD HIMSELF, we may be sure from our LORD'S own promise;—which HE declared, both when HE sent out His disciples; and also at another time: "He that receiveth you receiveth ME, and he that receiveth ME receiveth HIM that sent ME²." He should obtain this blessing who received them, not because they were more eloquent or learned than others, but because they were "the Sent" of CHRIST,—the Prophets or sacred teachers appointed by HIM; for HE adds, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward."

Thus after eighteen hundred years, since our LORD ascended up into heaven, we have still this great privilege existing among us;—the peace of GOD pronounced upon us, the very peace of JESUS CHRIST. As we read on this occasion, to which the text refers: "When the doors were shut where the disciples

¹ Luke x. 5, 6.

² Mat. x. 40; John xiii. 20.

were assembled, came JESUS, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you:" so is it with us; for HE hath also said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." And we have also the other part of the text, "As MY FATHER hath sent ME, even so send I you," fulfilled among us to this day; for the ordained Ministers of the Church are the very same order of persons which were appointed by CHRIST HIMSELF, in regular succession, from that time to this. And it is much to be observed, that when our LORD sent them forth to preach, HE did not give them any name denoting their great and Divine gifts, such as Prophets; nor anything that implied their power of converting the world by eloquence, such as Preachers, but Apostles, or "the Sent," so that this might be always the point in the Church to which His faithful flock should look, not what His ministers are in themselves, but whether they are "the Sent" of JESUS CHRIST. And, indeed, the word translated "Preacher" in the Gospels signifies the same thing, i. e. the "herald" or ambassador of CHRIST.

Now we find that even under the law, the priest was commanded to bless the people: the very form is given in these words: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." To this it is added: "And they shall put MY Name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them³." Much more, then, of the blessing of CHRIST'S ministers, may it be said, "They shall put MY Name upon them," for Christians are called by the Name of CHRIST, "and I will bless them." It is GOD HIMSELF that blesses them by His servant. In the office, indeed, for the Visitation of the Sick, as will be seen in the Prayer Book, both these forms of blessing, that of the Old and the New Testament, are joined together, as if in both to claim the promise of God to His people. The first is where, according to CHRIST'S own words, the minister is appointed to say, on entering the house, "Peace be to this house;" for our SAVIOUR has promised that "if the son of peace be there,"

³ Numb. vi. 22—27.

“peace shall rest upon it.” And at the end he is required to use the words of that blessing in the Old Testament, to which the LORD has added, “And I will bless them.”

Now, many persons expect to derive great good from sermons, and from some sermons, they think, they can derive no good at all; but in these things we are led too much by our own poor, frail, human judgment. After all, sermons are but the words of man. But, surely, to the thoughts of faith, to them who would walk by faith, not by sight, more certain good might be derived from the Blessing; for that is CHRIST HIMSELF speaking in His minister; it is HE who has power to give what HE declares, and Who has promised, that HE will bestow it, not to all, indeed, but to him that can receive it; “if the son of peace be there.” Indeed, this was the appellation of the priest in the Old Testament, whom the LORD “had separated, to minister unto HIM, and to *bless* in His name.” Melchizedek, that great type of CHRIST HIMSELF, had nothing else that showed him to be a Priest, but that he gave a Blessing. And it seems probable, that our LORD HIMSELF used some solemn and remarkable manner of dismissing persons with His Blessing. Thus, it is said, after the miracle of the loaves, in the fourteenth of St. Matthew, “HE constrained His disciples” to enter a vessel and depart, “while *He dismissed*,” or sent away, “the multitude.” And “when HE had dismissed them,” it is added, “He went up into a mountain.” And, on another occasion, it is said, “When HE had dismissed the people:” as if His dismissal of them was accompanied with some remarkable action, that the Evangelist should thus notice it: in like manner as His “giving thanks” whenever HE broke bread is recorded by each Evangelist. And when they had brought little children unto CHRIST, that HE should pray for them, we do not read that HE prayed for them, but that “HE put His hands upon them, and *blessed* them.” For HE could bestow upon them, by His blessing, all that could be gained by prayer. So that, besides His other modes of doing good to men’s souls and bodies, being HIMSELF a Priest and Prophet, the only true Priest and Prophet, HE used solemn forms, “putting His hands upon them, and blessing them.”

We cannot, therefore, doubt, but that, besides the benefit of prayer in God’s House, and the hearing of His Word, to those

who are rightly disposed to receive it, "the son of peace," as our LORD says, there is some great benefit derived from the solemn Blessing or Benediction which His minister pronounces in His name; not the same, of course, which is derived from the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but still, peace and grace, according to the measure of faith in him who receives it. Many good persons who have come to Church, and kept their attention fixed there, as before GOD, have found inexpressible peace and comfort afterwards. Now, no one can say how much this may be owing to this Blessing; for it must ever be remembered, it is the Blessing of CHRIST HIMSELF, inasmuch as it is in obedience to HIM, by His own appointed messenger, and in His Church, in which HE has promised to be present unto the end. It is not merely a prayer, as you may observe, but a prayer and a gift also; it is not like the appointed Blessing pronounced by the priest of GOD in the Old Testament, according to His own especial command; but it is CHRIST HIMSELF, the only true HIGH PRIEST, Who comes into the midst of you, though "the doors be shut," and says, "Peace be unto you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." For in Christianity, it must be remembered, there are no mere ceremonies; it is only unbelief that talks of Church forms as if there were no life in them; it is only unbelief that makes them mere forms. They who can sit at the prayers, and not pray; they who can hear the Blessing pronounced without awful thoughts;—it cannot be doubted, that they are the very persons who would have received no benefit from CHRIST's presence, had they seen HIM in the flesh with their bodily eyes. Indeed, what we read of CHRIST's bodily Presence of old in the Gospels, is extremely like His Spiritual Presence in His Church. For then, you know, it was said by almost all persons, how can HE be the Christ? how can the SON OF GOD be really present among us? They felt no benefit from His being among them, because of their unbelief. Their eyes were holden, so that they could not see HIM; and their ears were stopped, that they could not hear HIM. Except, indeed, those that were afflicted, they, indeed, were relieved by HIM, and comforted, because they, or their friends, had faith enough to look to CHRIST under the pressure of their afflictions; so it is now, when persons are

afflicted, then they find comfort in religion ; then it is commonly said of them, that they are “ wonderfully supported ;” that is, in fact, that the presence of CHRIST supports them beyond human means : but, in general, people engaged in worldly business and employments do not realize CHRIST’s presence in His Church ; they lose the benefits of it through unbelief. Many of them go to places of worship which CHRIST has not authorized ; and then they lose the very forms which convey these blessings to us ; and lose too often all reverence for His awful Name, for His ministers and sacraments. They think, indeed, that if CHRIST was present for the bodily eye to behold, that they would be the first to serve HIM ; that they would give up all to follow HIM from place to place ; that if they had lived of old, they would have acted very differently to what the Jews did ; while all the time, in the sight of GOD and His holy Angels, they are the very persons who reject HIM ; it is the same thing over again and again in His Church, viz. CHRIST stretching out His hands all the day long to a gainsaying and disobedient people, and saying, “ Ye will not come unto ME that ye might have life.” It is much the same with regard to the daily Service ; people cannot see the use of it ; sermons they can see are very useful ; now what is this but downright unbelief ? they cannot see the use of conversing with GOD,—the benefit of approaching near unto HIM in prayer ; but they can see the benefit of conversing with man, of hearing his words. Others again, seeing, indeed, the exceeding value of prayer to GOD, and how much the good of their souls must depend on such approaches to HIM, and the great importance that they pray to HIM “ in Spirit and in truth,” yet look too much to their feelings at the time ; they do not consider that devotion, a devout sense of GOD’s Presence, without which all prayer is but a mockery of GOD, is a habit to be obtained by pains and labour. To come before GOD in His Holy House is always a serious matter ; a person ought never to come into Church, without praying to GOD beforehand, that he may do it with reverence. He should consider that coming to Church is a temptation—a temptation, indeed, like that of Abraham or Job, for which GOD gave them a thousand-fold ; but still a temptation : it should be the subject of his morning prayers, that he may not come into GOD’s Presence with unworthy thoughts or a careless

wandering mind; it should be the subject of his evening reflections, and self-examination, whether he has not done so. It is for want of this seriousness of mind, that men do not in these corrupt days see GOD in the holy offices of His Church; if they would attend more to the keeping of their hearts, they would cry out, "Surely, the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not;" and "How dreadful is this place! This is no other but the House of GOD, and this is the Gate of Heaven."

All these, I say, depend on the keeping of the heart, out of which are the issues of life, not on the feelings of the time, but on the daily life; on keeping a devout sense of GOD's awful Presence at all times; on walking as in His sight. It is fearful to think what deceits even apparently religious people put on themselves; how they go on deceiving others, and deceiving themselves, till they come to persuade themselves, that they can deceive GOD. This is fearful indeed, because one cannot but think what it must be to have this veil of self-deceit taken away on the day of Judgment.

No one can seriously read our SAVIOUR'S Sermon on the Mount, without seeing how much of this there must be in our corrupt nature, from the cautions which our LORD so awfully gives us against self-deceit and hypocrisy. Many, HE declares to us, will come to HIM on that day, speaking confidently of the good things they have spoken, and the wonderful works they have done in His name. Of whom HE will solemnly declare before men and angels, that HE has never known them. Their house was built on the sand: without it appeared fair, and firmly established; but it was all false, it had no foundation. How many appear to be all their lives seeking for peace in those ways of excitement in which it can never be found! Indeed, the one great desire of fallen nature is for peace; but it is only to be found in GOD: HE is our peace. "There is no peace, saith my GOD, to the wicked."

SERMON CCCXXI.

ANNIVERSARY OF CONSECRATION.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

ST. JOHN i. 51.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the Angels of GOD ascending and descending upon the SON OF MAN.”

THERE are many reasons which make these words applicable to the occasion of our meeting here to-day. First of all, as they are addressed by our LORD to Nathanael, who, for good reasons, is supposed to be the same as Bartholomew, whom we hold in especial memory on this day. And in the next place, they refer us back to the Old Testament, from which they are taken, where we read, that Jacob “ took of the stones of the place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down to sleep ; and he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven : and behold the Angels of GOD ascending and descending on it.” We may, therefore, suppose that our LORD alluded to the dream of Jacob in making use of these words, implying to Nathanael, that the dream of the Patriarch was then on the point of being fulfilled.

And in what way did Nathanael see this fulfilled ? we do not read that he ever did really behold Angels ascending and descending with his bodily eyes ; but we may suppose it to mean, that in the works which he should witness our SAVIOUR performing, as the SON OF MAN, he should behold

this by the eyes of faith. For, indeed, the dispensation which was coming in, was called "the kingdom of Heaven," and was, in fact, no less than "the Heavens opened," and "pouring down righteousness," as the Prophet had spoken; and the coming in of which was indicated at our LORD'S Baptism, when the heavens were opened. And the miracles of mercy which our LORD did, so plain and palpable to the eyes and ears of men, proved no less than that Angels were ever present to execute His commands, coming and going from Heaven.

This, therefore, which Nathanael was to behold, was not to be literally and exactly fulfilled, in a low and carnal sense, but only to the eyes of faith, such as he had, in a way more wonderful and higher than the mere words imported. And if they, who beheld our SAVIOUR in the flesh, were to witness things so great and marvellous, not less surely is the promise to them who should behold HIM in the Spirit; for the promises to His Church, after His departure, were greater than any made to them while HE was with them; for our LORD said, that it was good for His disciples that HE should leave them, in order that the Comforter should come; and declared, that HE HIMSELF, together with the HOLY SPIRIT, should be with them till the end of the world. For the Christian Church is not called the Kingdom of Heaven only when CHRIST was visible upon earth, but, if any thing, more so after His ascent into Heaven. How and where, therefore, are we to discern those things which were promised to Nathanael? It is evident, that by faith only can they be discerned; for the miracles which Nathanael witnessed were beheld by vast numbers, who, in seeing them, did not behold the Heavens opened, nor Angels ascending and descending. Surely it is in a Christian Church that these things are fulfilled; for it is within those sacred walls where two or three are gathered together in His Name, that our LORD has marked as the more especial place of His Presence; and where HE is there Heaven is opened. And what less than these words can we apply to Holy Baptism, which takes place in these sacred abodes of GOD? what less can describe it, than the Heavens opened, and Angels ascending to Heaven with prayers, and descending from Heaven with blessings? And, it is to be observed, that Holy Scripture, as it were by accident, yet, doubtless, with a Divine purpose, speaks of CHRIST HIMSELF baptizing, when it

is done by His appointed ministers, by which we are taught, that in His ministers we are to behold not them, but CHRIST in them. And at the Holy Communion, is it any thing less than the SON OF MAN awfully, but mysteriously with us? Are not the very words, "This is MY body?" And again, is not the sacred building called especially by our LORD "the House of Prayer," not of preaching, for this is very different, but "of Prayer." And did not our LORD teach us; that on this account the deepest reverence was due to His FATHER'S House; and a zeal so transporting, so great, that it can never exceed bounds till it is equal to that of the SON OF MAN, in Whom was fulfilled, "the zeal of Thine own House hath eaten me up." For these reasons, good men of old used to believe, that Angels were, in an especial manner, present in Churches; and more particularly about the altar, as ever attending on the SON OF GOD. And knowing that all these things are matters of faith, not of sight, they used to be very careful to keep up in their minds a right sense of these things; for the faith of every one is according to his actions. For this cause they showed all possible reverence to Churches, knowing that GOD was, indeed, there present; but that no one could be made sensible of His presence, or derive any blessing from it, except by approaching with becoming awe and seriousness of mind. For this cause they kept with great care, not only the day itself on which the Church was consecrated, or dedicated to GOD, but also the return of the same day every year. And, perhaps, this they did not only from feeling how much these things tend to show and to strengthen our regard for GOD'S House, but also from knowing that our LORD HIMSELF was present at Jerusalem, at the feast of Dedication; which fact, like all others concerning HIM, was doubtless "written for our learning." And, indeed, in thus doing they were only doing what nature itself dictated; for as children of this world, wherever there is any thing which we think much of and value, we show our feelings in this way, and strengthen them in doing so. For do not all people of every state and every nation, keep the birthday of a friend? or of kings, and great persons who are popular? and great events that they value much, and important battles which have secured their welfare? And to the eye of faith, and to us as children of light, is not the consecration of a Church, of far higher value, of more interest and

concern, an object of more affectionate sympathies and regard than any of these things can be? Here we keep the birthplace and the birthday of children born, not as heirs of sin and the children of wrath, but of children born to God, and heirs not of earthly estate, but of His kingdom. Here we celebrate the arrival of the Great KING of Heaven coming down to dwell among us. Here we commemorate His victory on the Cross over sin and death, at the Holy Eucharist. Surely, therefore, our holding these days in especial memory is only doing what all men do respecting those things which they feel to be of deep concern and value. No one finds fault with people for keeping a birthday, or commemorating the recovery of their liberties. But here it is more especially needful, for in so doing, we by faith realize the things that are unseen: all things with respect to a Church have to do with two worlds; in so doing we act as they who are citizens of, and belong to another world.

First of all, how is the Churchyard like a spot of ground which belongs to two worlds, to this which is seen, and to that which is not seen? With regard to this world, with what thoughts is the first Consecration of it connected! how many among us is it to receive, to sleep for a little while until that last morning of the great Resurrection? The most important thing in this world is our departure hence, and this our last earthly home. And how many, before they themselves depart, are to leave their best treasures here! But if we consider it with regard to that unseen world with which it is also connected, how much more awful and concerning still;—the bed where the body is lain in the care of God and good Angels, at a time when the soul awakens, to find, perhaps, that it has for ever lost its great prize, like the rich man in the parable, or to find that it is for ever safe in the bosom of Abraham and with JESUS CHRIST. And how different must the thoughts be of those who meet together on the other side of the grave, to the thoughts of those who leave here the mortal remains! No man can know these things, or think of them worthily; but they are all known to GOD: and surely, it is no slight matter that we should hope to obtain His blessing to rest for ever on such an awful place, by the Consecration of His chief pastor; and that we should keep it in devout memory lest HE should be there, and we know it not. At such a time when a

Churchyard is solemnly dedicated to HIM, the eye of faith beholds, as the Patriarch in his dream, a ladder set on the earth, and the top of it reaching to Heaven, and Angels ascending and descending upon it: ascending up to Heaven and bearing the souls of the righteous, and descending to take care of their mortal bodies. The eye of man, indeed, in such a spot can see no more than rude stones like those which the Patriarch made his pillow; but surely, if our eyes were open to see the things of the other world we should so behold it.

And if all this is true of a Churchyard, how much more true is it of the Church itself in which God is worshipped; surely, this does, in some very wonderful and mysterious manner, contain within its walls two worlds, the seen and the unseen. And if the thoughts of men in the flesh respecting a *Churchyard* are so different from those who look upon it from the other world; still more must this be the case with the Church itself, which our LORD has solemnly called "the House of Prayer." How it is that GOD is present here more especially, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, the most dreadful and most merciful Trinity; how it is that good Angels are present;—we cannot explain, we cannot understand: but devout and humble men will by care and habits of reverence come to the knowledge of it, and will be able to understand what the holy Psalmist means, when he speaks of GOD'S HOUSE, in such words as a man would almost speak of Heaven. For the difference between Heaven and earth is this, that in Heaven they behold GOD'S face, and on earth they do not.

In a Church there are, as was said by holy men of old, two assemblies, the one of Angels, and the other of men. But, oh! how different is the conduct of these two in GOD'S PRESENCE? We know how the Angels and Spirits in Heaven worship GOD; that they hide their eyes as unworthy to look upon HIM; that they fall down on their faces and worship HIM with the lowest self-abasement and prostration; or they sing the song of Moses and the LAMB, and say, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, just and true are Thy ways, THOU KING of Saints, who shall not fear THEE, O LORD!" And happy and blessed as Angels would men also be, if they could thus fear GOD, and forget all things else in the fear of HIM. But, oh! how very

different is the conduct of men before HIM, when they are in His holy House, to that of the Angels; many of them not even kneeling down in prayer to HIM, but sitting as unconcerned in His awful Presence. How very poor and unworthy are the thoughts of the best of men, in the midst of a blessing so vast and incomprehensible as the privilege of coming into GOD'S Presence! How very seriously ought we to pray to HIM, to grant us the hearing ear and the seeing eye, that we might in some degree hear and see HIM, lest HE should be in this dreadful place, and we know it not; lest we should not behold in His Divine ordinances the ladder that reaches unto Heaven. For let us consider how all things in this place are but the shadows of things which are in Heaven, and lead us on to them. What is a Church on earth, but a sort of type or emblem which GOD has given us of that Church which is in Heaven, where they are never weary of praising GOD day and night, and live and are blessed in the light of His countenance. When the appointed Minister of CHRIST is praying in His Name, then does the eye of faith behold the Great Mediator between man and GOD interceding in Heaven, and feel confidence and trust in GOD, that in HIM that Great Intercessor, his prayers shall be heard. How does Holy Baptism in this place appear to the eye of faith, as the sign or emblem appointed by GOD HIMSELF, of that other regeneration and new birth which shall take place at the day of Judgment; when no longer by His own Stewards as upon earth, but with His own sacred lips the SON OF MAN shall say, "Come, ye blessed children of MY FATHER, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." How does the Holy Communion set before us, by the appointment of GOD HIMSELF, that other great "Supper of the LAMB" which is to be in Heaven, when the Bridegroom shall no longer be hid, but shall come forth to view and welcome His guests, that are found worthy to sit at that table. We may reasonably suppose, that there is no ordinance which GOD has appointed in His Church, but is meant to be, to the thoughtful Christian, a type or shadow of things invisible. Thus even holy Marriage is, we know, but a type or shadow of CHRIST'S spiritual union with His Church.

And not only in the Church itself, and in these Sacramental Ordinances, is the eye of faith trained and exercised to discern

the ALMIGHTY GOD; but to those who make it their great care and study to do so, even out of Church, the knowledge of GOD'S Presence as dwelling and living in that consecrated spot with a peculiar blessing, makes all the difference in their daily life and habits, and in the light in which they may behold all things. It makes the whole village where a Church stands sacred and amiable in their eyes, and full of other and better thoughts. We all know what a difference it makes in our minds, if a great earthly friend or kind master is living in a house that is near, if we know that he is at home, and ever ready and glad to receive us with his best welcome. How different—how comparatively desolate and forlorn does the same place appear, when we know he is not there, but far away! Much greater than this is the difference between those who do not consider these things, and those who look upon a Church as the House of GOD, where HE is especially present, as in His own House of Prayer, and, we Christians may add, in the House of His Blessed Sacraments. Surely the words which the holy David speaks of the temple of GOD, imply something far greater, something far more opposed in his feelings to those of the men of this world, than any thing we can say of this difference. Surely, they who by faith realize these great blessings, will see what our Gracious SAVIOUR means, when HE calls His Church upon earth, "The Kingdom of Heaven." To such, indeed, HE says in secret—as to His disciples removed from the multitude, and with HIM when apart from the world—to such, HE says, that though others seeing see not, yet "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

And who are they who, going through the vale of misery, thus use it for a well; and the pools are filled with water? Who are they, what kind of persons, of what character are they, who are thus ever refreshed by the waters of Holy Baptism? or, in other words, who, amidst the manifold distractions and troubles of the world; the many secret sorrows of their own hearts; difficulties without, and fears and disappointments within—the things which make this world a wilderness—are calculated to find comfort and repose in GOD, in the GOD of their New Birth, the FATHER, the

SON, and the HOLY SPIRIT ; to behold HIM in His Church, present in His Sacraments, and giving life to His ordinances ? Holy Scripture will afford us particular and explicit descriptions of the temper of mind which is most calculated to do so. The Psalmist asks and answers the same question. " LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill ? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue."

It is to the same kind of person, simple and open, having no deceit or falsehood in his words and ways, to whom our LORD makes the promise which is in the text, of beholding these heavenly things ; for of this Nathanael HE had HIMSELF just before testified, that he was " an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." By which words, " an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," our LORD may imply, that he was like Israel of old, of whom it is said, that he was " a plain man," simple and guileless. And, perhaps, this was the reason why Israel of old was particularly blessed, as it was supposed, with the power of beholding GOD and His good Angels ; for not only on the occasion which the text refers to, but on two others, we read of him to the same effect. On one occasion, that he awoke from the stone, which was his pillow, with awful reverence and amazement, saying, " How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the House of GOD." And at another time, that he wrestled with GOD, till he had obtained a blessing ; and called the place Peniel, because he had " seen GOD face to face."

Such as Nathanael—they who have but one purpose and one object in view—a single heart and single eye—and that one object to please GOD, and to wait on His will—have especially this privilege ; and such are " the pure in heart," of whom it is said, that " they shall see GOD ;" shall see HIM, we may well believe, in His House of Prayer on earth, as well as in Heaven. And such St. James describes as the persons whose prayers will be heard ; for he says, " that the double-minded man " must not think that he, by his prayers, " shall receive any thing of the LORD." And when he mentions the gracious blessing, " that GOD will draw nigh to them who draw nigh to HIM," he adds that caution, " purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

We must, therefore, purify our hearts, and obtain a single mind to know how "wonderful" GOD is in His "holy places." No sooner had the good Nathanael found that our SAVIOUR had been with him under the fig-tree,—had known what had passed there, probably in prayer,—than he at once readily believed, and declared HIM to be the SON OF GOD, the KING of Israel. There is something in a simple heart which is thus ever ready to believe; and to such CHRIST ever makes greater manifestations of HIMSELF. Such a one catches at every slight intimation which proves GOD's eye present at his prayers, and watches, and at once acknowledges and perceives every answer to his requests. And from these he is ever led on to greater things, to the great secret of the Holy Eucharist; where, according to the prayers in the ancient Liturgies, he sees Angels ascending, and bearing the oblations and alms into the presence of GOD's awful Majesty; and descending with that bread which cometh down from Heaven, the true manna, of which he that eateth shall never die. And, perhaps, this was intimated when our Blessed LORD said, that the worship of GOD would no longer be confined to Jerusalem, but the FATHER sought those to worship HIM, who should "worship HIM in spirit and in truth." They who thus worship HIM, they only can behold the Kingdom of Heaven now in the midst of us; heavenly things in the things of earth; can discern in poor vile elements, as bread and wine, the Body and the Blood of CHRIST; in the waters of Baptism, the cleansing power of the HOLY SPIRIT; in Marriage, the type of CHRIST and His Church; in Confirmation, the unseen gifts of the SPIRIT; the Presence of CHRIST, where two or three are met together in His Name; and in the consecrated Churchyard, see that sacred sleep which is in CHRIST, in Whom we may say, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for it is THOU, LORD, only that makest me dwell in safety."

S E R M O N C C C X X I I .

ON SUBSCRIBING FOR CHURCHES.

ST. MARK xiv. 4—6.

“And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ?

“ For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

“ And JESUS said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her ? she hath wrought a good work on ME.”

WHEREVER any thing of the love of GOD exists, there must be a desire to sacrifice some considerable portion of our worldly goods to HIM ; and the most ordinary way of doing so is by giving to the poor, in whom CHRIST has promised, that HE HIMSELF shall be found ; and that HE will consider such gifts as given to HIMSELF. And besides the relief of our poorer neighbours, every one who loves and values those appointed means and places in which GOD is especially found—as Churches, and Sacraments, and all the ordinances of GOD’s worship, and things dedicated to His honour—feels, naturally, some desire to give up something to GOD more immediately in this way. This is the natural expression of love ; wherever the love of GOD is, there is a desire to make some offering to HIM, some sacrifice that may redound to His honour and glory ; and it would be a great privilege, indeed, if we are allowed to do any thing to His honour.

But then the question arises, Will this be acceptable to HIM ? HE loves a spiritual worship, and the care of the poor, but does

HE love also these external and outward signs of our love and reverence? To this, I think, we shall find a most satisfactory answer in that most interesting incident which is recorded of the good MARY pouring the precious ointment upon our Blessed SAVIOUR's feet, and His most gracious acceptance of it. Some had indignation against it, saying, that the ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. It was, we know, Judas Iscariot, "not that he cared for the poor," very far from it; for, as the Psalmist says, "his eyes were set against the poor;" he hated the good deed which showed so much love; and he desired to obtain the money for himself. He is an example of such complainers in all ages. But why was this good deed so exceedingly pleasing to CHRIST and honoured by HIM? It was not that HE Who, in every sense, loved poverty, cared for such things—what was the precious ointment to HIM, Who is the MAKER and PRESERVER of all things?—it was because it was the manner in which love to HIM was showed—"she did what she could"—she had been at, what was to her, great cost, because she loved much. She had saved it with great care, and, probably, for a long time; and the value of the ointment is mentioned, it was worth more than three hundred pence. Now, we find in a certain parable, that what is called a penny, was the wages of a labourer for a day; and, therefore, three hundred pence was about the wages of a labourer for a whole year. And although so great was the value of this treasure, yet it was all gone in a few minutes, when the box was broken; but by CHRIST's gracious gift, the fragrance of that ointment remains unto this day. It was a sign of love; and she who gave it was no ordinary person; she was that one of whom the Great JUDGE HIMSELF had already borne witness, that "she had chosen the good part, which should never be taken from her." She has been supposed to be the same person who was the very earliest at His grave at the Resurrection, and the very last at His grave at His Burial. She, if any one, knew what true love of CHRIST is, and in what ways it will show itself; and, therefore, her gift was so precious in His sight.

But here it may be asked, now that CHRIST has gone from our sight, how do we know in what ways the same love for HIM may be shown? HE is, indeed, present in His ordinances and House of Prayer, and it is natural in these to show HIM honour; but

how do we know that these are in like manner accepted of HIM, like this peculiar gift of the holy sister of Lazarus ?

Now, there is another incident which happened a few days after this we have been speaking of, which will set this subject also in a satisfactory and clear light. Our LORD, on leaving the Temple of Jerusalem for the last time, sat down by the treasury, and, calling to HIM His disciples, HE pointed out to them an instance of the very highest charity ; such as would be set highest of all gifts on the day of Judgment, when HE shall call together, not His disciples only, but “ the heavens and the earth, that HE may judge His people,” and such as will then be found to be most rich in treasure laid up in Heaven. It was the poor widow who cast in two mites into the treasury, more accepted of CHRIST than all the offerings of the rich. Now, this poor offering was made for the service of the Temple ; for restoring the building, and for keeping up the daily ordinances of that magnificent Church. This, therefore, exactly bears on the case we are considering ; that gift most of all praised and held out to us for imitation by CHRIST HIMSELF, was one insignificant in itself, but given for the worship of His Temple.

To this it may be added, that when of old GOD HIMSELF was pleased to prescribe and teach men in what way HE would be worshipped, HE required every thing to be done with very great care, skill, and costliness. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness in great want of all things, we read at much length, how GOD required the Tabernacle to be made, and all things appertaining to it, with exceeding care. The gold and silver, and precious stones, and carved work, out of the riches brought for that very purpose out of Egypt, are all recorded ; and how GOD inspired men with extraordinary skill for the work. And, afterwards, the holy David, the man after GOD’s own heart, showed his singular zeal and love for GOD in nothing so much as in all that he did for His worship and service, and preparations for the building of the Temple. He it was that exclaimed with righteous zeal, “ I will not offer a burnt-offering unto the LORD my GOD of that which doth cost me nothing.” And all this, his exceeding care for His worship, was very highly accepted of GOD. Yet the holy David, and his son Solomon, well knew that “ the Most HIGH dwelleth not in temples made with hands ;” that the

Heaven of Heavens cannot contain HIM, much less that House which he had built. He knew, and pathetically describes, that he had nothing to offer to GOD but what was His before; yet rejoiced in this privilege, that even in giving all, his gifts were lost in the sense of GOD's bounty to him.

One point more is to be observed. That in the Revelation of St. John, where even the Temple of GOD in Heaven is described, it is spoken of under these same figures. The City is described as being paved with gold; her foundations of precious stones; her gates of pearl; that is to say, every thing the most costly upon earth is taken to describe the place in which GOD dwells, even as HE had required all these things in His worship of old.

Now it is not to be supposed that any thing of this kind is of itself of any value in the eyes of ALMIGHTY GOD; gold and precious stones, and all the cost and the skill of man, is as nothing before HIM. GOD Who is a SPIRIT, and is worshipped in spirit and in truth, can be served quite as acceptably in the very poorest Church that ever was raised to His honour, as in the most magnificent building. It is all the same to HIM, as long as it is the very best that we can offer; but, in order to be acceptable to HIM, it must be the best. What HE requires of us all, is the heart; this it is which makes all the difference in His worshippers; and the heart never can be right when a man can lay out the best on himself, and the worst on the service of ALMIGHTY GOD. The ointment that was poured on HIM, was nothing to CHRIST; but the heart that offered it made it of exceeding value. This is the reason why it is recorded as being so costly, and worth more than three hundred pence: this made no difference to HIM of itself; but as showing the greatness of her love. "See now," said the holy David with self-indignation, "I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of GOD dwelleth within curtains." A very poor Church dedicated to ALMIGHTY GOD is, no doubt, very acceptable to HIM, if it is the best that the people can afford: like the widow's mite, like the precious ointment of the good Mary; for this reason, GOD may be worshipped as well in a very poor Church, as in a very rich one, if it is the best the people can offer to His honour. But if persons are laying out gold and silver on themselves, and nothing at all or the very refuse of what they have on the worship of GOD; this is a sure and certain proof

of the state of their hearts. And throughout the Prophets, we often read how offensive their conduct is to GOD. "Cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing." We need not quote Holy Scripture to prove that the worship of such persons can be of little value in His sight.

The notion which has been received among Christians of late years on this subject is, indeed, quite shocking to natural piety; the very heathens will rise up in judgment against it: for we seem to consider nothing too good, nothing too expensive for ourselves that our money can buy; and any thing good enough for the worship of our Gracious GOD, our MAKER and SAVIOUR. It is, indeed, almost as it was when our SAVIOUR was born among the Jews of old; we must live comfortably in an inn, and, therefore, cast HIM out; a stable, a manger, and an out-house is good enough for HIM; there is no room for HIM in the inn—we must have that for ourselves. We must have silver; some common metal is good enough for HIM and His service.

But here again, another question may be asked, In the spiritual worship of Christians is GOD so careful of holy places? does HE much look for such observances? and as some profane persons have ventured to say, Are not all places alike to HIM? and one place the same as another?

In answer to this, let us consider what induced the meek LAMB OF GOD, HE Who went about doing good, and healing all men, and full of blessing, HE Who said, "Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart;" what led HIM to seize the scourge, and, as it were, to forget HIMSELF on two occasions, on account of His righteous indignation, when HE drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple of GOD? What made HIM so extremely different on those two occasions to the rest of His conduct upon earth, so that those two actions stand out in contrast, as the very opposite to all that HE ever did beside? The Psalmist himself will tell us. His disciples remembered that it was written: "The zeal of Thine House hath eaten ME up." It was because His FATHER'S House was so ill-used and lightly treated: whereas HE would not allow them even to carry a vessel through the Temple.

And this circumstance is the more remarkable, because our LORD at the very time said that that Temple of the Jews was

about to be destroyed; and therefore, what HE then did in cleansing the Temple, was not intended merely to teach the Jews how they were to keep that Temple; for the Jewish religion was then to be all over and finished in a few days, and the Christian Church was to come in. It was, no doubt, to teach us how HE would have us keep those places of worship, which HE was about to establish, when HE said, that His House should be called "a House of Prayer unto all nations," and not be a place of merchandize. His House of Prayer to all nations; that never was the Jewish Temple, for it was confined to one nation; but it must be that House in which we worship. HE well knew that a right keeping of the heart depended on a right keeping of holy places; and that nothing could prove more the profane wickedness and covetousness of that nation, than when they made even the House of God itself to be polluted by it, and to minister to their covetousness.

And yet all this, let it be observed, was under the show of Religion; what were the sheep and oxen and doves, and the tables of the money-changers? they were not merely like our markets, things that had nothing at all to do with Religion, but they were all for the service of GOD; these were only the things needed for offering sacrifices to GOD. So far from being wrong, it was all, the Pharisees might have said, for the sake of Religion, and GOD's service. But let us remember what the SON OF GOD did in His own House of Prayer. Depend upon it, this action of our Blessed SAVIOUR cannot be thought of too deeply by us. It is of no little importance to us all how we reverence and respect holy places and holy things.

But now to return to the subject, on expending our best on the right worship of GOD. The ALMIGHTY has so appointed it that the true service of HIM is the best cure for the diseases of our sick souls; to pray to HIM, to praise HIM, to worship, is the medicine of our hearts. Now the disease with which this country is sick to the very heart—corrupt throughout, so that from the head to the foot it is full of bruises and putrifying sores, and there is no soundness in it, becoming, no doubt, offensive before GOD and His good Angels—this disease is the love of money. It is quite impossible for any one who reads his Bible with any thought, to look out on what is going on in the world,

in railroad speculations and the excitements of business, and on what is said on such subjects in Parliament, and the like, but that he must feel at times heavily oppressed under the sense of coming judgment. A nation hurrying to and fro with the love of Mammon, so as to be the very spring of life to it, as the heart is to the body, this would lead one to fear that God is preparing for judgment. What then is the cure for all this? why, surely, to make ourselves friends of the unrighteous Mammon, that when God visits, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

And now from looking abroad upon the world, with regard to this subject, let us come home to ourselves and our own parish. It is evident, that many hundred years ago there have been persons who endowed this parish for ever with the tenth of their property for the maintenance of God's worship; and who built a Church, from which it appears, from the few signs that remain of what it once was, and the things belonging to it, that those who have built it, must have had a single eye, not to their own conveniences or comfort, but to God's honour; they never could have spent money on themselves, with such care and skill, at such cost, as they provided for the service of ALMIGHTY GOD; as is evident from the signs which yet remain of what it once must have been. For persons who understand these subjects, consider that there is scarcely a Church in this kingdom, which has been so ill used as this. Others, again, have given of their substance for the education of children, to be brought up in the fear of God; not for themselves only, not for their own times did they thus deny themselves for God's honour and service. And here let us consider, with regard to this Church, how many hundred souls from generation to generation have prayed to ALMIGHTY GOD, have joined in His solemn service, have heard His Divine Word, have received His Sacraments, have been warned, and comforted, and converted within the walls which they, who are now with God, have built, and by the means which they have provided? How many hundreds have, we may hope, been saved, humanly speaking, by their means, and will stand up by their sides on the day of Judgment? Nay, what is indeed a most affecting thought, from beneath this Church where we stand, and around its walls, those who have worshipped here, will arise up together with the first founders of it on

the Great Day ;—to plead as it were before the Great Judge for them, i. e. as witnesses of what has been done by their means. The very walls that they built, they built in such a manner that those walls themselves will find a voice and speak for them. To how many solemn thoughts have these very walls themselves ministered, both within and without ; and even at a distance the very spire daily pointing to Heaven, and the sound of the bells which remind us of God's House, these have a kind of voice by which they that are dead yet speak, and call to us that are alive ; reminding us even every day we live of God and Heaven.

Now I say, when they of this generation arise together with them, what shall they have to show ? Surely the very opposite to all this. Have they not brought the unrighteous Mammon even into the House of God ; greedy even in the very House of Prayer of distinctions to mark our own pride and our own covetousness ? What is the meaning of private property, even in the very House of God condemned by the laws both of God and of man ? what means possession in the House of God ? the letting and hiring and selling of pews ? Now, in good truth, if this is not making the House of God a house of merchandize, I really know not what is. If the buyers and sellers who brought beasts for sacrifice into the Temple were so condemned, are we quite guiltless in these things ?

But let us allow that very much is to be pleaded, if not in justification of these things, yet in excuse for them, from the evil spirit of the times, by which we almost all of us alike have been so blinded as hardly to have known what we have been doing ; yet, surely, can it be right for generation after generation to pass on and do nothing for the service of God, either in the place they live or in any other ? Can it be right for any one of us to let a single year to pass over our heads, and yet to do nothing towards laying up treasure in Heaven in any way whatever ? I do not now speak of any particular things which ought to be done ; on this there may be different opinions ; and as long as it is done for the sincere love of God, perhaps it does not much matter what it is which is done. Some persons may think, that most good is done by schools ; some, by sending money abroad to preach CHRIST Crucified to the poor heathen ; some, to supply means of grace to our own poor at home and abroad ; some, in showing, that the best

they have is but as nothing to express their thanksgiving to ALMIGHTY GOD, for His Sacraments and means of worship at home : I say not which of these is best ; but this I will say, that unless persons are disposed to make far greater sacrifices to ALMIGHTY GOD, than Christians now usually are, that their religion must be something very different to what Christianity used to be. I will find no fault in the manner in which they would wish to do this ; but let it be in some way or other.

The indignation of Judas, “ Why was this waste of the ointment made ; it might have been sold for much, and given to the poor ? ” and our LORD’s defence of the good Mary in consequence, this seems to teach us, that we ought not to look with a jealous and unkind eye on any thing that is done for the love of CHRIST, although we may think it mistaken. It is the love of HIM that will make any thing valuable in His sight ; and without it, nothing is of any worth. And let it be remembered, from both these instances, that they are the offerings of the poor, which are most accepted of HIM ; it has nothing to do with whether a man has much or little. He has a heart, that is all that is needed, and a soul to be saved ; to these alone CHRIST looks ; He needs “ not yours, but you.”

But again, I say, let every one do something ; do not hide under a stone, and hoard up for the moth and rust ; do not spend what you have on your own pride and comfort ; but be content with that most blessed and good Mary, to be accounted a fool in this world, that at any cost you may win CHRIST.

Do not, I beseech you, think these are mere words ; do not think they are spoken to your neighbour and not to yourself. They are spoken to yourself, whoever you are. Surely there is hardly one man to be found to whom these words ought not to be spoken, who does not need to be warned especially upon this subject, until we come to understand and remember with constant anxiety, that *no money is safe until it is paid into the treasury of God*, against the last great Day, when we shall most need it.

SERMON CCCXXIII.

THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.

PHIL. ii. 5.

“ Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS.”

THERE is one week in every year, and there is one day in every week throughout the year, wherein we are called upon by the Church to hold in especial memory and meditation the sufferings of our Blessed SAVIOUR. And we may reasonably inquire, what is the great end, the great benefit we are to look to in so doing. If we ask many Christians of the present day, they will fully allow that there is nothing so good, so infinitely beneficial to us all, as to dwell and meditate on the sufferings of JESUS CHRIST; and they will tell us that this is in order that we may come to a full conviction and persuasion that we have an interest in those sufferings.

But if we ask the Bible and Prayer Book, they will tell us nothing of this kind; they assure us that whoever is baptized has an interest in those sufferings, and that we ought to think of them very often and continually, in order that we may be conformable unto His death. In Passion Week, when our LORD's sufferings are made the subject of all the services throughout the whole, the Collect for the week—which is usually a key to the rest of the services—reminds us that one design of CHRIST's death was, “ that all mankind should follow the example of His

great humility;" and teaches us to pray "that we may follow the example of His patience." And then the Epistle for the Sunday begins with the words of the text, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS." Now, throughout all that is read in the Gospels of the different accounts of our Blessed SAVIOUR'S death and sufferings, there are a great many incidents from which each person for himself may learn "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS;" and if he, in ever so humble a way, endeavours himself to follow that example, then he may be assured that he is doing a service which will be very highly acceptable to GOD. By imitating CHRIST he does in a way draw nearer unto HIM; and by so doing, by drawing near unto HIM, he will be made partaker of those blessings which were ever dispensed by His gracious Presence wherever HE appeared, according to the need of each; he will most assuredly derive all that strength, support, and comfort, which those who approach HIM cannot fail of attaining. Following the example of JESUS CHRIST, and endeavouring to obtain something of that mind which was in HIM, these are points which the devil cannot counterfeit. Wherever, therefore, there is this sincere endeavour, we may be sure it is from GOD; and so far as we have the fruits of this spirit in our lives, so far we may trust we are true Christians. But every thing else, such as mere good thoughts, and professions, and confidences, and being much affected by JESUS CHRIST'S love and sufferings, all these may be delusions of Satan. I will therefore mention a few things which may serve to show us the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS our LORD; and if we have any thing of the same in ourselves, we may have the inexpressible comfort that the image of JESUS CHRIST is being formed in us. But if we have not, nor are endeavouring to obtain it, then whatever our confidences may be, we are none of His, HE knows us not: GOD sees not on us the mark of His children.

Now, we are quite certain that our Blessed LORD must have known the full worth of all things, that nothing whatever is worthy of any serious regard but what HE thought so; deceive ourselves as we may, this we can never deny, that nothing can ever be truly valuable to us excepting what HE thought so. † This is as certain as that there is a sun in the sky.

Then consider, that with regard to all the goods of this world,

the comforts that money can afford, or worldly power and a good name, HE was utterly regardless of them, and chose to be without them; teaching us thereby that we should be willing to be so.

We are perhaps very willing to be without wealth or honour; we are not desirous to be lifted much above our present station; for we know that such a change would not add to our happiness; but for all this we may not be at all nearer the mind that was in CHRIST JESUS. For worldly prudence of itself would teach us this; and heathen writers are full of such sentiments. But the point for us to consider as Christians is, are not our minds, notwithstanding, taken up with things temporal, as if they were of great consequence? do not our cares and our joys depend very much on these things? fretted at losses, elated at some advantages, discontented because we have not something which our neighbour has, quarrelling and disputing, as if these trifles were of more importance than one step on our way to Heaven or to hell?

And yet if we were to lose every thing we possess, we should not be worse off, with regard to external things, than our Blessed LORD chose to be; for we know that HE was not only more destitute than other men, but even than His own animal creation. For "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the SON of MAN hath not where to lay His head."

Others, again, are discontented because they have not those domestic blessings which some of their neighbours enjoy, such as relations, wife, and children, and the like. Yet JESUS CHRIST chose to be without all these; by which HE would doubtless show us, that there is nothing of any importance, nothing worth caring about, in all these things. Neither are we the better if we have them, neither are we the worse if we have them not. If we have such comforts, we are to be thankful for them; if we have them not, we are quite as much to be thankful that we have them not; for we may be quite certain, in either case, that we have what is best, when we have what GOD gives.

When I say that these objects are not of the least consequence either way, I mean, of course, taking all things into consideration. For he who would have any thing of that mind which was in CHRIST JESUS, will consider the privilege of being a Christian, and in GOD's favour, a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the king-

dom of Heaven; and surely if he does at all consider these things as he ought to do, he must necessarily think every thing else as of very little consequence. If we have any mark whatever of this mind in us, a time will come when we shall be glad of it, "as one that findeth great spoils"—beyond all thought; if we have any symptoms in our conduct that we are not of this mind, a day will find us out when we shall see too late that we have been greatly mistaken in our value of things.

For consider how dark and blind we are, how ignorant of every thing truly good for us. In this dark valley of the shadow of death, our only true light is that which is about the steps of JESUS CHRIST, our great DELIVERER and EXAMPLE. If it were true of any Prophet of GOD, how much more of HIM, that whatever HE hath blessed is blessed, and whatever HE hath cursed is cursed! O wonderful great truth, which now wraps us around like a strange mystery, but which every heart shall at last acknowledge, and every tongue confess!

I will mention another point in which we may see something of the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS, and endeavour to obtain the same. We know that among human beings like ourselves, whenever any one's mind is occupied by one great subject, that every thing he sees and every thing he does has some reference to it. May we with reverence and humility apply this to what is written of our adorable and ever Blessed LORD, in order that we may thereby gain a lesson for ourselves.

Every one who knows the Gospels must, I suppose, have remarked how much it was our SAVIOUR's custom to have noticed every thing that was passing around, and the objects which, from time to time, presented themselves before HIM and His hearers, in order to lead people's minds to great and heavenly truths,—humility and the love of GOD. Thus it was, perhaps, when HE saw the lilies of the field, and the birds around them, that HE said to His disciples, "Behold the lilies of the field!" and told them, that if these flowers were so beautifully clothed, and the fowls of the air were fed and taken care of by His Heavenly FATHER, without any thought or anxiety of their own, how unreasonable it was in man that he would not put his trust in HIM, as he was in GOD's sight of much more value than birds of the air. And when HE saw little children, HE took them up in His arms,

and told His disciples that they must be like such little ones, to inherit His kingdom. And when they talked of bread, HE told them very much of the Bread that came down from Heaven. And when one would have given HIM water, HE told her of the living Water, of which he that drinks shall never thirst again. And when HE saw persons at a feast to which HE had been invited, ambitious to be the highest, and each desirous to sit above his neighbour, HE taught them something better, and would remind us, that if we would but seek the honour which cometh from GOD only, and take the lowest place now, when the great MASTER of the feast comes at the day of Judgment, HE will tell us to go up higher. And HE often read men's hearts, and took occasion from their own thoughts to teach them. Always, from every thing, in every place, drawing lessons of heavenly wisdom,—the lost sheep, the lowering sky, the lost money, the sowing of seed, every thing HE made divine and heavenly. At all times, if we may use His own most sacred words, was HE “about His FATHER's business.”

Now, although it is His humility and meekness more particularly in which we are called upon to be followers of JESUS CHRIST, yet in this also, which amongst men would be called heavenly-mindedness, must we also put on His Divine image and likeness. For our conversation, too, is in Heaven; and if we mind earthly things we shall die. If our heart is in Heaven, whatever we see will remind us of it; if our treasure is there, whatever we do will have a reference to it. When we go to bed we shall think of death; in the morning we shall think of the Resurrection; when we see poor and destitute people, we shall think of JESUS CHRIST; when we hear of persons quarrelling, we shall think of GOD's love to us; when we hear of persons doing wrong, we shall think of ourselves and of the Day of Judgment; when any one is inclined to think well of us, we shall think of the SEARCHER of hearts and His all-seeing eye.

In whatever we behold around us in other animals, birds, and beasts, and insects, we shall see abundant signs of GOD's fatherly love and care; and we shall feel so assured of this His goodness to all His creatures, that when we see in them other things which we cannot account for,—as, for instance, how they should have to suffer so much pain,—we shall be sure that even this is some-

how for the best, that there is some cause for it, and that God has some way unknown to us to recompense them for it.

So likewise in what happens to ourselves and others, *with this mind* we should see very much God's hand with us and about us in every thing; and should be so persuaded of His goodness to us, that even in those things where we could not discern the reason of His dealings, we should still acknowledge that HE is infinite love and mercy, perceiving His treasures of goodness scattered far and near. *With this mind* we should in all things be able to gain lessons of instruction for ourselves; and from the same to teach others also; like the wise householder, bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old.

So was it the case that every thing whatever was to JESUS CHRIST an opportunity for teaching the great truths of the kingdom of God, and of introducing thoughts of Heaven and hell. Even when His earthly relations—His mother and brethren—were spoken of, HE took even this occasion to teach those that sat around HIM, that he who would do the will of His FATHER which is in Heaven, was as mother, and sister, and brother to HIMSELF.

Now, for persons to be always talking of religion, and bringing in sacred truths in an affected and familiar way, as some do, in order that they may persuade themselves and others that they are religious, this is doubtless wrong; and we may be sure that people do not feel very deeply and seriously that which they make a show of, an affectation of talking about it. But yet, notwithstanding, whoever would in any way come to "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS," must have his heart always full of religion at all times. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and whatever is spoken from the heart simply and unaffectedly, will, with God's blessing, find its way to the hearts of others.

There is one mark of this heavenly "mind which was in CHRIST JESUS," by which we may ascertain, perhaps better than by any other, whether we have any thing of this mind, and that is, by the earnestness and constancy of our devotions. From the life of our Blessed LORD, we may suppose that HE was praying, in some sense, at all times; but whenever HE had an opportunity, it would appear as if HE retired to pray without distraction, alone or with His disciples; that HE continued whole nights in prayer.

Whenever any one feels no inclination to pray, and that seriously and soberly, he may be sure that there is something amiss. When a person finds the Prayers of the Church long and tedious for half an hour or an hour, here also there must be something wrong in his mind or mode of life. A heavenly-minded disposition feels prayer to be a great privilege; and whenever outward hindrances are taken away, will naturally return to it.

There is another great point in which we may see very remarkably "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS," and that is, in His constant and unwearied goodwill and kindness towards all that were about HIM. It would appear that our Blessed SAVIOUR never rested from doing good, wherever HE was, to the bodies or souls of men. Even in His most overwhelming agony in the garden HE forgot not His disciples, but often returned to them; even when His enemies were laying their hands upon HIM, HE omitted not to heal the wound of one of them. Even when they were nailing HIM to the wood, HE prayed for them. Even in His extreme suffering on the Cross, HE was not unmindful of His poor Mother and beloved Disciple. Even in the midst of that dreadful conflict with the powers of darkness, HE did not fail to watch over the beginnings of repentance in the dying thief, and to accept him and comfort him. And so also through the circumstances of the life of our Blessed LORD, whether HE was at a feast, or in a ship, or walking from place to place, HE was always doing good to those around HIM; and this very often in little things, which we might have thought were beneath the dignity and majesty of the SON OF GOD, in such actions as most proud men would never stoop to. None so humble but that HE would do them good. Even the unclean and outcast leper, whom others would not come near to, HE touched with His sacred hand, and bore HIMSELF his uncleanness and sickness.

None so ignorant but HE had patience to teach them. And when HE had taught them very long and patiently, and yet found them dull and ignorant of HIM at the last, HE still bore with them, and taught them again. "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known ME, Philip?" Words, indeed, of sorrow and disappointment, but of the most gentle tenderness and love.

None so unbelieving and impenitent but HE still watched, as

it were, about them to the last, "waiting to be gracious," and never gave them up till all possibility of doing them good, and all hope of their amendment, was gone.

In all these things there was not only every thing that was kind to every individual, but also what was very considerate. Each person our Blessed SAVIOUR so treated as if HE was their greatest and best Friend, entering into all that they most wanted and needed; not as if HE would throw away His gifts and blessings, not caring where or to whom they might fall, like the false liberality and false kindness of the world; but with a most affectionate and particular attention, taking into consideration the peculiar needs of each.

To conclude; in these circumstances which have been mentioned of our SAVIOUR'S example, it must be remarked, that they are all things in which any one of us may imitate and follow HIM. We indeed may think that we should be willing to do some great acts of charity or works of religion; but not such was "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS;" but HE was at all times doing the most lowly actions of kindness to the very humblest and meanest people. In these three points we have mentioned, we may "go and do likewise."

HE valued nothing in this world, trusting in GOD; so may we, by the aid of His good SPIRIT. His mind was always full of religion in all things; so may ours be also, with His blessing. He was always doing good; so may we be. If we read the account in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew of those eight characters or sort of persons who are blessed of GOD, we shall find each of them shown fully and entirely in JESUS CHRIST'S life and example. Or again, if we read St. Paul's description of charity or the love of GOD, in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, we shall find every circumstance of it most perfect in the example of our Blessed LORD. If we read of the fruits of the SPIRIT, such as St. Paul speaks of in his Epistle to the Galatians, we shall find them such, that we shall bear them all so far as we approach to the character of JESUS CHRIST. So that we can only be good Christians by becoming like JESUS CHRIST, by looking upon things as HE did, and not as the world does around us.

And now, if it were some man that we were told to imitate, to

think as he thought, and to judge of all things as he did, to love and hate all things that he did, to act like him, and to be of one mind with him, it were a very different matter from our being told to be of one mind with JESUS CHRIST, Who is GOD as well as Man. For we cannot look to HIM, and think of HIM, and approach HIM, without worshipping HIM also, and feeling His wonderful Presence with us. For we cannot draw near to HIM of ourselves; but if we ever wish to do so, we know that HE is most willing to draw us near to HIM. This it is that renders the example of CHRIST HIMSELF of such infinite value and importance to us, that in the very reflecting on it with seriousness, there is a sort of transmuting and transforming power to make us like HIM. There is an influence and effect in the very gazing on CHRIST itself with love and sincere desire; it is like turning our faces to the sun, which at the same sheds his light on our countenances. St. Paul expresses it in divine words: "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD."

St. Paul here speaks of it, not merely as a matter desirable or to be recommended, but as a fact which was actually taking place at the time in himself and others; he speaks as one who felt himself, at the time when he spoke, to be in the midst of that transfiguration—if I may so call it—of the soul; like as when St. Peter said, in the midst of that Transfiguration on the Mount, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." And surely we have in St. Paul himself a remarkable instance of this change. "Be ye followers of me," he says, "as I also am of CHRIST." And every one who reads the history and letters of this Apostle, must be struck with the wonderful self-denial, and charity, and holiness, almost more than human, yea, doubtless, far more than human, that filled his heart and life. The reason evidently was, that he thought so much of the example, the life and death of JESUS CHRIST, as continually breaks forth in all his writings. He had so thoroughly laboured, with the aid of GOD's blessing, to come to "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS."

SERMON CCCXXIV.

THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.

PHIL. ii. 5.

“ Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS.”

It is not sufficiently considered, I have said, how much our Blessed SAVIOUR'S example serves to set before us the true value and worth of things. Yet nothing surely can be more important for us to know than this,—to know what things are really trifles, and will at last be found to be so, and what will be proved in the end to be substantial and important.

We find among men that there is the greatest difference of opinion concerning what is really desirable, and worthy of our hearts, thoughts, and attention. Some men think one thing and some another. And not only this; but the same person differs very much from himself at different times; at one time of life we value and desire very much what we care nothing at all for at another. But some things there are which almost all persons, *i. e.* the world in general, are agreed in considering very desirable, such as some degree of wealth and power, and a good name. And the reason is, because these afford the means of indulging ourselves; and to indulge ourselves, and exalt ourselves, is in some shape or other the wish of fallen human nature.

But “the mind of JESUS CHRIST” is the very opposite to all this; and since HE is “the true light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world,” “the Way, the Truth, and the

Life," all these things which the natural man esteems desirable, will in the end prove to be nothing more than mere shadows and delusions. And the reason why the world since it has been called Christian does not see them to be such according to the example of our LORD is, "because the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

For it is to be observed, that JESUS CHRIST not only chose for HIMSELF all what are called natural evils, but in an especial manner sanctified and blessed them, and pointed them out as the means by which we might best of all approach to HIM, and obtain the riches of His Kingdom. For HE says, "Blessed are the poor," and "blessed are they that mourn," and "they that are persecuted." Yet these conditions here spoken of are what we call evils, and naturally shrink from.

But it would seem as if HE having chosen these for HIMSELF—"the weak things of the world to confound the strong"—has made them on that account so powerful that they overcome the world; as we read, that "virtue went out from HIM, and healed them all," and a wonderful power filled even the garments that HE wore: so, also, natural evils, after HE has been pleased, as it were, to put them on, have become to His disciples full of a certain Divine efficacy and power. But more especially if they are undergone with the same spirit with which HE underwent them, that is to say, willingly, and in the love of GOD and man. For this reason, the Bible throughout sets before us in every point of view, "the strength of GOD perfected in the weakness" of man. Thus, for instance, from the very birth was it with the great Saints of GOD; they were born of mothers who were considered barren and incapable of bearing children, as was the wife of Abraham, and the mother of Samuel, and of Samson, and of John the Baptist; and all through their lives afterwards they exemplified what St. Paul said of himself, "when I am weak then am I strong." Thus also was it with nations, when they were in distress, and captivity, and suffering, then they turned to GOD; then was their season of strength; then were they reconciled to GOD, and in His strength overcame all things: whereas, when they appeared outwardly to be prosperous, they fell away from GOD, and became as weak as the chaff before the wind.

Now, to take the two instances here mentioned of remarkable

persons and of nations, what were these two cases, but, in the former, HE that was born of a Virgin, contrary to nature, so sanctified thereby human weakness that His Saints also were born, as it were, beyond nature? And in the latter case, what was it but the efficacy that went forth from His lowly estate, and Cross, and sufferings, that not only sanctified these conditions as means of grace to individuals, but a state of distress was blessed to whole nations, so that they found therein their way to His Cross,—to forgiveness and restoration?

The Old Testament is full of things of this sort, setting forth, as it were, the doctrine of the Cross, every thing that is good and holy flowing from humiliation, and the strength of this world set at nought, as leading to pride and then to ruin.

And when at last JESUS CHRIST came to overcome the world, we know how HE did in every instance choose the things which were most of all the contrary to what the world would have thought the means of strength,—by humbling HIMSELF lower and lower to the very lowest depths of human degradation and misery, as the passage from which the text is taken so eloquently expresses it, and pointing out this example to all as the means of approaching HIM and overcoming the world.

“The servant is not above his master, but he that is perfect must be as His MASTER,” *i. e.* there is no other way but in imitating HIM by which we can draw near to HIM.

And again, he that humbleth himself most, HE taught in various ways, would be the highest in the Kingdom of Heaven, and he that most exalted himself would be the lowest. HE strongly insisted that there was no coming after HIM without taking up the Cross daily and following HIM. That he who would save his life must be content to lose it as to this world. And, indeed, the very first opening of His teaching,—the very first words, were the opposite to what the world has always considered to be the case, the contrary to what was expected, and to what mankind are still determined to believe, notwithstanding His declaration, *i. e.* that the Blessing and the Kingdom is with “the poor in spirit.”

And all this is expressed in those words of our Blessed LORD to His Disciples, and in them, in some sense, to all Christians, “Ye shall be indeed baptized with the Baptism which I am

baptized with," and "ye shall indeed drink of My Cup." The Baptism with which HE was baptized was we know the Baptism of blood and suffering; and all Christians must share this with HIM. And the Cup which HE drank was that Cup which HE spoke of a little time after, when HE said, "FATHER, put this Cup from ME,"—it was the Cup of anguish and pain, which human nature shrinks from. Of this Cup we must all partake together with HIM.

But in these expressions, which HE was pleased to use of His Baptism and His Cup, we cannot but suppose that our LORD graciously intended some allusion also to His two Holy Sacraments. His Baptism was, indeed, a Baptism of blood, but it was that Baptism by which all the world were washed clean of their sins. When our LORD, therefore, speaks of human sufferings under the name of His Baptism, HE perhaps meant, agreeably to the teaching of all Scripture, that suffering after His example had, from the efficacy of His own Cross, some sort of, as it were, Sacramental power,—that it was a means of disposing our hearts towards HIM.

And when HE spoke of it as His Cup, it may be that HE meant that it was like the Sacramental Cup of His own Blood, which was to be the support and life of all Christians afterwards; in other words, that all Christians must learn to bear the Cross after HIM, and then they will come to know the power of His Cross and Passion.

This St. Paul also often sets before us, as when he says, that "if we suffer with HIM we shall also reign with HIM." And he speaks of himself as filling up that which was behind of the sufferings of CHRIST for His body's sake, *i. e.* the Church; and as bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS, "that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in our body." And in another place, as bearing in his body "the marks of the LORD JESUS."

And so much did he set forth the pattern of his LORD in this meek suffering, that when he says to us all, "be ye followers of me, as I also am of CHRIST," he evidently means by this, that it was a resemblance to CHRIST that hallowed his sufferings, and his wish was that others should partake in like manner of this resemblance.

Now, there is one point in which it is manifest to all, that the sufferings of CHRIST have not relieved us from suffering likewise, but which we have all to undergo notwithstanding, and that is, in dying. We have all to undergo the pains of natural death, and we trust that we may come to them with that mind, with that resignation and trust in GOD, that our sufferings may be made acceptable and pleasing to GOD by being joined with those of His SON; and that for the sake of His Death, that HE will be graciously pleased to look upon us; inasmuch as we are rendered thereby in some sense "conformable unto His Death."

And the same may be said of all temporal evils besides death, that we are not to think that we are released from them as if CHRIST had suffered them in our stead; but, on the contrary, that by His example they are sanctified, and blessed, and made full of heavenly power and virtue; that they are the means of purifying and cleansing us, and are, in short, no longer evils, but blessings; so that, as of death itself, St. Paul said, "To me to die is gain," so may it be said, "to me to suffer is gain."

In this manner we should use ourselves to judge of all things in this world "with the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS," if we would know their real worth and value. There is nothing we ought to be so much afraid of as any thing that exalts us, or leads us to indulge our natural desires. We must not allow our hearts to suggest to us, "I may be a little higher and richer in the world, and live with more ease and comfort, and yet be quite as good notwithstanding as I should otherwise be." For there can be no doubt, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there is something in worldly goods which is positively hurtful and detrimental to our spiritual state; that we must be wiser than the wisdom of Scripture if we think otherwise. The example, indeed, of almost all persons around us would seem as if they thought the contrary; but this is because they do not sufficiently consider the light in which Holy Scripture puts these things, and because our natural bent is so much the other way.

The different light in which all things appear to a person when he is in some deep affliction, to what they do when he is in prosperity; or when he is fasting and afflicting himself, or practising any little self-denial, to what they do when he is giving himself up to unrestrained indulgence,—the difference in these two states of

mind is something quite wonderful. In one of these states, that is to say, in affliction and mortification, we look upon things in their true light; but in the other, we saw all matters under false colours, not as they really are; they make this world appear every thing, and the next nothing; like the glare of the sun, which makes the world appear bright around us, but hides from us the stars of Heaven and those infinitely greater objects which are at a distance.

We should, therefore, *always* rather seek than shun those states which will lead us to judge of things aright, and as we shall one day wish we had; for there is no use in encouraging ourselves to take realities for shadows, and shadows for realities, since the truth must so shortly break in upon us. For it is in no case the truth, as we would wish to have it, that we may exalt and please ourselves a little, and still know and understand equally as well as we otherwise should, of what spirit as Christians we ought to be; but, on the contrary, as the higher we exalt ourselves the further we shall be from it; so, also, the more and more we go on through life to humble ourselves, the more shall we come to "the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS." For let us observe, how from the very highest point HE is spoken of as abasing HIMSELF to the very lowest. For what the Apostle says in his Epistle, in other words, is this,—let your thoughts and designs be such as were in CHRIST JESUS, for when HE was in the form of GOD, and indeed could take upon HIMSELF without saying too much to speak of HIMSELF as equal with GOD, yet HE emptied HIMSELF of all His glory,—and still more than this, HE took upon HIMSELF the form of one of His own servants and creatures; and not only that, but of the most corrupt and fallen of His own creatures, for HE was made in the likeness of fallen man; and being found in the form of a man, HE still went on to humble HIMSELF, and became obedient, and that too, it is added, even unto death; and as if this was not enough, to that death which was the most shameful and painful of all,—the death of the Cross. This is to be that Divine mind which we are to obtain.

Now, that we can never be good without denying ourselves, is so evident on the least experience, that the heathens used to teach this; but how it was that suffering and self-denial had

this great power they could not know, because they had not seen CHRIST. Whereas to us it is said not merely that we are to take up the Cross, but to follow HIM, and by following HIM to draw near to HIM, as it were. Still more than this, we are told to bear the Cross after HIM, that is, like that Simon of Cyrene, to bear not our own Cross, but (O the unspeakable privilege and mystery!) to bear the Cross of CHRIST after HIM and for HIM: in bearing our own cross to find that it is His Cross after HIM,—that blessed Wood itself, so full of anointing and saving grace.

We are told it is thus that we are made like unto HIM, are made to partake of His blessings, and brought, as it were, into “the fellowship of His sufferings.” Therefore it is that, as says a holy Bishop of our Church, “the mystery of the Cross is to be learnt under the Cross.”

Thus in Scripture we are not only told, “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” and “whosoever humbleth himself as this little child shall be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven:” but we have the example of our LORD held out to us in so doing; and not only that, but His own refreshing grace and unspeakable consolations especially flowing to us in them; as is expressed in these words, “Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest for your souls,” *i. e.* by imitating His lowliness we shall be brought to HIM.

Thus also, in like manner, not only does Scripture tell us, “Blessed are they that mourn,” but especially invites the mourners to approach “the MAN of Sorrows;” as if it were the efficacy of His sorrows that made mourning to be blessed, as His own gracious words imply, “Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” And therefore the Church, on the Sunday before Good Friday, sets before us especially the example of CHRIST’s humility, as if it was His example which is to bring us into a communication of His sufferings when we afflict our souls through the week of His Passion. So that, as it was in the days of His flesh, that those who were most afflicted in body and mind received the most benefits from our SAVIOUR’s gracious Presence among them, so is it now. HE is still present with us as then, but for the most part our eyes are holden, so that we see HIM not; but those who are afflicted

and humbled are most of all brought to know and feel the benefits of this His Presence.

But now all these things are well known in a general way; but we may wish to know in what particular points we may come to obtain these blessings. Those who obey the commands of the Church in those seasons and times when she calls us to humiliation and repentance, must know full well.

It is only sufficient to observe, that in Holy Scripture there are two other great duties united with Prayer,—giving of alms and fasting; and the directions for all three are given together, as if these three together were the great means of a holy life. As prayer is the communion between earth and Heaven, so these especially dispose the heart to prayer. For giving of alms makes the actions of life clean and pure to us¹; and we know that in prayer we must lift up “clean hands and pure hearts².” And how necessary fasting is for prayer, the indications of Holy Scripture, the example of every good man, the experience of every one of us, and nature itself, teaches us.

So blessed is the warfare in which as Christians we are engaged, in which natural evils have become good to us. And, therefore, this consideration may well hinder us from entertaining any anxious cares or fears respecting them, any apprehensions of them beforehand, or impatience under them, should they be given us. While, as far as our hearts are engaged in this world, we cannot but have many anxieties and disquietudes for the present, and disappointment in the end, if truly resolved on humbling and denying ourselves every day that passes, as it brings us so much nearer, so does it make us more fit for the end of our course. All run the race, “but one receiveth the prize;” so saith St. Paul in his Epistles. “Many are called, but few chosen,” says our LORD HIMSELF in the Gospel.

The time is short, and the work we have to do requires much exertion; it is not a matter of words but of actions; it is a matter of life and death, of Heaven and Hell; and therefore mere words are weak, even if they were spoken by the tongue of an angel; they are weak indeed, compared with the importance of these things in themselves. How very weak, therefore, must be such words

¹ Luke xi. 41.

² Ps. xxiv. 4.

when spoken by a man who can himself but feebly understand them, who seeth them but in a glass darkly, and who is himself no better than others !

Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, are but mere words, for which we have no adequate corresponding thoughts ; but there are great substantial realities signified by them, of which great realities we must one day be partakers. May God grant of His mercy that it may be for good and not for evil !

Therefore it is, as I tried to show in the beginning of this Discourse, so infinitely important to us that we look to the Mind that was in CHRIST, inasmuch as HE alone can see the true value and worth of all things, as we shall at last come to comprehend and acknowledge.

The time is short ; for where the tree falleth there it must lie. But, as I said, words are nothing, and knowledge of itself is nothing. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

SERMON CCCXXV.

BEING RISEN WITH CHRIST.

ST. LUKE XX. 35, 36.

“They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage :

“Neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels ; and are the children of GOD, being the children of the Resurrection.”

THE Resurrection of our LORD from the dead has made Christians, in some great and peculiar sense, the children of GOD. And this is implied in the twenty-second Psalm, which minutely describes our LORD's sufferings on the Cross ; for when it comes to speak of our LORD's Resurrection at the close of it, we read, “I will declare Thy Name unto *My brethren.*” In like manner, our LORD HIMSELF, as soon as HE was risen from the grave, says, “Go and tell it unto *My brethren ;*” whereas HE never addresses His Apostles as His brethren before. And if by the death and Resurrection of CHRIST we are made His brethren, it is of course because we are also made children of GOD by the same, in some mysterious and heavenly sense.

And as the Scriptures describe so constantly the state of a Christian as that of being dead with CHRIST, buried with CHRIST, being conformable unto His death, and bearing about His dying, so do they also of his being risen with CHRIST, and of his ascending to Heaven with CHRIST.

Now, of course, in the highest and fullest sense, it is of those which shall be thought worthy to attain that life which is in

Heaven after death, that holy Scripture speaks in the text, when they shall be risen together with CHRIST, with glorified bodies made like unto the SON OF GOD, being therefore anew the children of GOD, "the children of the Resurrection," and "equal unto the angels."

But whatever is said of the heavenly state hereafter, is also in holy Scripture said of the Christian state now on earth; we are already children of GOD, being children of the Resurrection; and the measure of our duty is that of angels, inasmuch as we pray daily that the will of GOD may be done on earth as it is in Heaven; and at the holy Communion we are said to eat "angels' food." But there is this great difference, that, in the present state, we must not only be risen with CHRIST, but, at the same time, also dead with HIM: risen with HIM in heavenly affections, in living a new life, by prayers and spiritual exercises day by day renewed in HIM; and dead with HIM in being more and more dead to worldly desires, and caring less and less for things earthly, and being like a dead man with respect to them. Not only so, but the more we are dead with HIM to things earthly, the more shall we be alive to things heavenly; the more conformable we are unto His death, the more shall we know "the power of His Resurrection," the more will His life be manifested in us; the more we are dead to ourselves, the more will CHRIST live within us.

And this union of death and life, of burial and Resurrection, of suffering and joyfulness, earthly death and heavenly life, human burial and divine Resurrection, suffering in the flesh and joyfulness in the spirit, is the state of the true Christian on earth; because the death and Resurrection of CHRIST are both fulfilled in him. And these seem to be both of them set forth in our LORD's own risen Body; for when His Body was arisen from the grave, a new and spiritual Body, coming and going through closed doors, passing from place to place without being seen, appearing and disappearing according to His will, and therefore so altered, and transformed, and glorified in its nature, that it appeared hardly like the same earthly Body; yet did it still bear about it the marks of death and suffering. The hole was still to be seen in the side that was pierced, and the marks of the nails in the hands and the feet; yea, from those wounds and deadly marks it was known by His disciples; and with these marks will it be seen on the

Day of Judgment; so that every eye shall see and recognize the crucified SAVIOUR, and they also which pierced HIM. And as the true disciple knows his LORD from these marks of suffering and death even in His glorious Body, so also is the disciple known by his LORD from these signs,—HE knows His true disciple by the marks he bears of being dead and crucified with HIM; for they that suffer with HIM shall also reign together with HIM.

Such is the true disciple of CHRIST in this world, ever risen from the dead with His LORD, and being with HIM in heavenly affections, and yet ever bearing about in the body the marks of the LORD JESUS. Both of these things must be alike fulfilled in him,—as belonging to this world, mortifying himself, doing violence to himself in order that he may deaden his members that are upon the earth; and at the same time, as belonging to another and better world, being renewed daily in heavenly hope and charity.

Now, both of these things are a great privilege; it is a privilege and blessing to be like CHRIST upon earth, to be, like HIM, a stranger and sojourner, as dying and buried with HIM; and it is also a great privilege to be conformed unto His heavenly likeness, to be with HIM in Heaven, and like HIM.

This is surely a very great and consoling mystery, that whatever is said of the future state of the redeemed hereafter, is also said of them in some sense now; for the Christian is already in the kingdom of Heaven, he is already a child of God, and made heir of an endless life. And by this it is evident that our Heavenly FATHER would have us already to anticipate in our hopes and thoughts, and, as it were, to realize upon earth that heavenly state, to look forward to it, and compare it with the things with which we are at present surrounded.

For although we cannot have any full and adequate sense of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, yet by comparing them with things temporal, we may obtain a lively sense of them; yea, the very evils which surround us may quicken our thoughts after those joys. And perhaps in no place can we find a more exalted description than in the expressions of our LORD in the text: "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage;" that is, because there is no death there; the ranks of that heavenly company are not

thinned and broken by the destroyer, and therefore there is no need of marriage. What a store of happy thoughts does this supply to us! There is no growing older, and day by day more near to our graves, in that blissful country; there is no disease, no anxious inquiry respecting the perishable and frail body; no pains sent to remind us of death; no separation from friends and relations; no melancholy changes produced by the absence and loss of those who made places on earth to be what they can never be again. In that blessed abode there is no setting sun, no autumn, no old age, because there is no night, no winter, no death; and therefore there are none of the things which accompany these things, no gloom, no decay, no misery.

Such circumstances are indeed inconceivable to us, for we can form no idea of a state in which there is no death; all that we know is, that such a condition must be perfectly free from all those things that here distress us.

And if from its duration it is unspeakable, so also is it on account of its greatness; for it is to be "equal to the angels." We can form no conception of what an angel can be; and we call that angelic which surpasses all expression; it implies something as far above all earthly greatness as the skies are above earth,—all love, and harmony, and peace. They rest not day nor night from singing the praises of God: so are their employments described to us, because music, and harmony, and singing praise, and love, and peace, are the purest and best joys we know on earth, and therefore approach most nearly to heavenly employments. But yet these things in themselves can afford us no adequate idea or conception of those blissful occupations which engage the inhabitants of Heaven. For these things here below are but some little change from those evils that oppress us; there is no substantial rest for the soul even in the best of them. For what do we know of peace? For those who have been agitated and distressed by disputes and contentions, there is nothing so delightful as peace; for those who have been afflicted by an evil conscience, by the struggles of the evil one within them, by bitter thoughts accusing them for past misdeeds, and affrighting them with the thoughts of the last Judgment, there is no joy on earth equal to that peace passing all understanding, which God affords to the penitent soul. But what is this peace? It is nothing else

than a release from spiritual troubles ; it is like rest to one that is weary. But rest implies toil and weariness, and peace implies disorders and painful struggles. The best good that we know in this world, is but a cessation from evil. To sing the praises of GOD is indeed the purest of all delights ; but it is no delight at all excepting to a heart full of love and gratitude.

Such as we, therefore, can form no idea of that state wherein the saints of GOD will be made "equal to the angels." And yet how very great is the expression ! how does it fill all our thoughts ! how should the reflection raise us above this world, and make us desirous here on earth to live the life of angels ! Yet no less than this is required of us, if we are to be risen with CHRIST, and even here on earth to be as "children of the Resurrection ;" to be in affection ascended into the Heavens with CHRIST, and sitting together with HIM in heavenly places.

Thus not only are the future employments, the privileges and blessings of the righteous set before us, but we are even here on earth required to fulfil them in some degree, showing that we do in heart believe them, by acting up to them. He that lives an angel's life on earth, will be equal to angels hereafter ; he that here on earth is as a child of GOD and a child of the Resurrection, shall be also hereafter a child of GOD and a child of the Resurrection. For we live by faith ; the proof that we have life within us is faith. We must begin to be now that which we would be hereafter. Whatever is given in Heaven to sight and enjoyment, is given here in some measure to faith ; and to them who embrace the promises now, shall be given to enjoy them in fulness hereafter.

And the fruits of this faith are love ; all that we know of angels is that they are love,—love to GOD and love to man. We know nothing of their power, nothing of their nature ; but we know that they have no desire for possessions, no desire to rise one above the other ; all that we know of them is, that they are purity and love. It is love that makes us children of GOD now, and will make us children of GOD hereafter. It is this character which our LORD has described to us as that by which we shall bear the likeness of our Heavenly FATHER. "I say unto you, Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your FATHER which is in

Heaven; for HE maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Now, how mysteriously great and Divine is this expression, that they who are worthy to obtain that world, are not only equal to the angels, but also the children of GOD! for to be the children of GOD is here spoken of as being a privilege greater and higher than that of being equal to the angels;—being the children of GOD, after some marvellous manner partaking of the Divine likeness! This it is which tongue cannot speak of, and heart cannot understand worthily, so great the holiness, so great the love that is contained in this word.

How does the heart sink within us when we consider how Christians live and die who have been called to so great a lot and condition, to be the children of GOD even now in hope, in grace, in privilege, and profession, and to be so in fulness and perfection hereafter! How awful is that expression of our LORD'S, "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world!" for it seems to imply that this worthiness will be rare and uncommon. And yet for them who are called to fall from so great a height by their own fault, is like being lifted up to Heaven, and falling down to Hell. But only consider what are the lives of those who are called upon to be equal with angels and children of GOD; how many are there who, instead of aspiring after the life of angels, by their own free choice approach nearer to the life of brute beasts! God has chosen for them a state of heavenly love and happiness; they choose for themselves instead what is "earthly and sensual," and, as the Apostle adds, "devilish." Instead of mortifying their members which are on the earth, cherishing them above all things, and losing the heavenly life within them. For is it not the case, that they whose hearts are taken up with eating and drinking, with wicked lusts and drunkenness, are called upon to be equal with angels? And yet Heaven and Hell are not more opposite to each other than these things.

Or again, what are we to think of covetousness and ambition in those who are called to so high a condition, who are already in CHRIST the children of the Resurrection? Are they not like the state of lost spirits, who have lost the power to choose the good and to reject the evil? And yet so great is the deceivableness of these vices, that very many are entangled in them before

they are aware of it, so that at length their thoughts are so chained to earth, that they are even on their death-beds calculating on gain and loss. Every morning that they awake is sent by the Almighty God to remind them that they are "the children of the Resurrection," born to look forward to the everlasting morning; but their first thoughts are chained to earth, because their last thoughts at night were of earthly cares and schemes. If night reminds them not of the grave, morning will never remind them of the Resurrection; and therefore all the day long their thoughts are bowed down to earth; all the day long their faces are turned, like those of the beasts, to the ground; they lose the power to look up to their heavenly home where the angels are; they have no interest for religious employments, no hunger and thirst after righteousness; their hearts have already gone down still lower than the graves that receive their bodies.

If this is not exactly true of all alike, yet there is not one who will not, in some degree, be obliged to plead guilty to this charge,—that he does not act so much with a view to Heaven as he ought to do; that is, that his treasure is not so much in Heaven as it ought to be, and that therefore his heart is not sufficiently there. For this reason we cannot be too thankful to Almighty God that HE has been pleased so constantly to join together the lesson of mortification with the lesson of heavenly-mindedness. To the lesson of mortification, indeed, we are called by His Church, throughout the whole season of Lent, and to thanksgiving and spiritual joy at Easter; but still at Easter, the Church does not then cease to teach us that lesson of mortification; but when we are called upon to live as "children of the Resurrection," and as risen together with CHRIST, we are taught still to go on considering ourselves as dead with CHRIST; yea, even in that day which is the most joyful day of the whole year, on Easter Day itself, the Prayer Book teaches us to reckon ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin," to "mortify our members which are upon the earth," to consider ourselves as dead, and having our life hid with CHRIST in GOD.

We are taught throughout this holy season, that we are risen together with CHRIST, in order that we may follow His example. And this His holy example of itself implies mortification and deadness to the world. Those, indeed, who most diligently

pursue their religious duties and Christian habits of life, find therein afterwards the greatest earthly delight and paths of pleasantness. But still, as long as we are in this world, no progress in holiness can be separated from self-denial; to lay aside the spirit and temper of self-denial, would be to lay aside our spiritual armour, and to expose ourselves anew to the assaults of the great enemy of our souls. As soon as ever we do so, we shall find our prayers become lifeless and cold, and the heavenly life within us to become weak and languid. It was the *rejoicing* of St. Paul that he died daily: the mourning of the Christian is ever closely united with his consolation.

The great benefit which those derive who carefully observe the holy season of Lent, consists, not only in that penitential frame of mind which those exercises are calculated to produce at the time, but also in this, that it teaches men to know, by their own experience, the inestimable value of mortification; to know how closely connected all heavenly affection is with self-denial and restraints of the flesh. Many would pass their whole lives without knowing this, unless they were called to it by certain times and seasons; then it is that they are taught, by doing the will, to know of the doctrine; and when they once know of the doctrine, there is some hope of it again influencing the practice of their whole lives.

This, I say, is the great value of the season of Lent,—a season set apart to afflict our souls,—that it teaches the great blessing of self-denial in the only way in which it can be learned, namely, by the practice of it.

Nor is Lent the only time when the Church calls upon us to this discipline, but every Friday in the year. And in both cases it is by the most powerful of all reasons that the Church urges this,—namely, by the sufferings of CHRIST; teaching us thereby, that if we would approach CHRIST, and obtain the inestimable blessings of His sufferings and death, it must be by mortification.

As he who humbles himself most will be most exalted, so he who is most of all buried and dead with CHRIST will also most of all be risen and ascended together with HIM; he who most of all denies himself here below, will the most abundantly partake of those treasures which are hid in CHRIST now, and hereafter of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore.

SERMON CCCXXVI.

ASCENDING TO HEAVEN WITH CHRIST.

COL. iii. 1, 2.

“ If ye then be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD.

“ Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.”

IF there is any great Christian doctrine which is forgotten and lost sight of, we shall always find that at the same time there is something wanting in men's hearts and lives respecting it. For no object of faith can be neglected without something corresponding to it in the affections and daily life being lost also.

Now, one of these great matters of faith is the doctrine of our LORD's Ascension into Heaven: and one of the chief festivals of the Church is the day of the Ascension or Holy Thursday, the fortieth day after Easter, on which we commemorate our LORD's departing from us and being seen going up to Heaven. But this day has been so much forgotten, that, although by the Church it is held in the same honour as Christmas Day, and Good Friday, and Easter Day, and Whit-Sunday, yet people in general who well remember and keep in some manner those other great festivals, yet have almost, if not entirely, forgotten the Day of the Ascension or Holy Thursday; it has passed from their attention and from their memory, as if there were no such day. And if we come to inquire what are the doctrines which Holy Scripture connects especially with the Ascension, we shall find that they

are those which have been forgotten by us of this age and nation in the same way that this Holy Day itself has been.

We may observe, that when our LORD's ascending into Heaven is spoken of, it is connected with some great power which is thereby given to HIM. Thus, in this passage in the Epistle to the Colossians it is said, "Seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of GOD." This sitting at the right hand of GOD signifies some great and peculiar power given to HIM; it is the fulfilment of the prophecy of David so often referred to by our LORD and His Apostles, "The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit THOU on MY right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." And St. Paul tells us more than once, that then especially was fulfilled the expression of the eighth Psalm, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet." All things, says the Apostle, excepting death, that "last enemy" which is to be destroyed. In another place it is spoken of as "angels, and principalities, and powers being made subject unto HIM," and of "all power of the enemy" being "put under His feet;" or, again, of "His ascending up on High," of His "leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men." In allusion to which our LORD says to His Apostles, that it is "expedient," or good for them, that HE should "go away." And, at another time, that "all power is given HIM in Heaven and on earth."

Now, as we know and believe that CHRIST is from everlasting equal to the FATHER in power and majesty, therefore we clearly perceive that when so much is said of power being given HIM at His Ascension into Heaven, and all His enemies being put under His feet, this signifies some especial power as the SON OF MAN in His Church, as GOD and Man together united and never to be divided; that it is in some particular sense with regard to us Christians that CHRIST has now this power, on account of the manhood taken into GOD,—our manhood being in Heaven. And it may be observed, that the very same words which are used in Scripture to express the power of CHRIST, as given HIM at His Resurrection and Ascension, HE does also HIMSELF apply to His own faithful Disciples; for as it is said that all power of the enemy is put under His feet, so HE says to them before His Ascension, "Lo, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing

shall by any means hurt you." It was at His Ascension especially that HE gave them this power; so that their having this power was to be the proof that they were sincere believers and faithful followers of HIM. "These signs," HE said, "shall follow them that believe; in My Name shall they cast out devils," "they shall take up serpents." At His Ascension was the Psalm to be fulfilled in the Christian, "HE shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways," "Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet." And, of course, all that is said of treading under foot the dragon, of going upon serpents and scorpions, signifies overcoming sin, the old enemy or serpent, mastering the corruptions to which the old man was subject by the fall of Adam. This is the power which CHRIST has purchased for us by His Resurrection and Ascension, when HE led captivity captive, *i. e.* led captive and overcame those evil spirits which before held men in captivity through disobedience; and when HE received for men the great gifts of His HOLY SPIRIT to overcome their failings. This was the power given unto CHRIST in His Church, and this is the power which CHRIST gives to Christians,—a power which they had not by nature, nor under the Law, being in bondage, that they might receive the inheritance of sons in the glorious liberty of the children of GOD; being no more the children of disobedience, but obedient children, fashioned according to the likeness of CHRIST, and holy as HE is Holy.

And therefore it is that there is at the same time another doctrine connected with this, when our Lord's Ascension is mentioned, not only that of CHRIST sitting at the right hand of GOD with all power to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin, but also of our seeking things above where CHRIST is,—of our affections being set on things above, of our being ascended together with HIM; and, as St. Paul says, of our sitting together in Heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS.

Now, all this appears to us very high doctrine, so much so, as to be very far above us, and, as it were, out of our sight; when we hear of such doctrine, we let it pass by like the wind, as that which is too high to concern us; for who is there now-a-days who lives as if he had overcome his corruptions, had mastered all worldly desires, and had his affections in Heaven, seeking always

with a settled choice the things that are above? Now, I do not mean to say there are no such persons at present in the world, but wherever they are, they are not of this age,—they do not belong to it, they live in old times, they do not receive the religious opinions of this age.

For all these doctrines of Christian heavenly-mindedness and holiness connected with the Ascension, are what were called in old times counsels of perfection: this word perfection they took from sayings of our LORD such as that to the rich young man, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow ME, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven;” or, at another time, to all His Disciples, “Be ye perfect even as your FATHER which is in Heaven is perfect.”

It is not meant by this word perfection that there is a state of life which some might aspire to more high and excellent than is absolutely necessary, and that other Christians might safely continue in a state of imperfection, being content with a lower degree of holiness as all that would be required of them; but by this perfection is meant a high state of Christian holiness and Divine love, which all might attain to if they pleased, and would be in danger if they willingly fell short of. For our LORD said to all, “Be ye perfect;” and the rich young man who would not receive that saying, “If thou wouldst be perfect sell that thou hast and give to the poor,” fell away, as it appears, from a state of salvation by not doing so. All persons are alike called upon to love GOD with all their heart, and soul, and strength. And this is what is meant by the term perfection; ways and counsels of perfection and rules of perfection, are ways, and counsels, and rules by which men might best imitate and follow the example of CHRIST,—might have all their affections set on Heaven, and love GOD alone and above all things.

Now, what I would here observe is this, that all these doctrines are connected in Holy Scripture with our Lord's Ascension, as if HE said, Over and above that Almighty power which I ever had as GOD equal with the FATHER, I have now a new power as made One with you, the children of men; I am from henceforth at the right hand of Power; you can do all things through My strength; nothing shall be impossible to you in overcoming your corruptions through faith in ME, especially through faith in My

Body and Blood at the Holy Communion, for this also is connected with My ascending to Heaven. From henceforth, as CHRIST is in Heaven, so they also, who by Baptism "put on CHRIST," may be there also, sending their treasures on there before them and their hearts following; having already the Kingdom of Heaven within them, while by the power of the HOLY GHOST, and through the Cross of CHRIST, they overcome the world. HE Who is made One with us, the MAN CHRIST JESUS, is at the right hand of GOD, angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto HIM. In the last ADAM, the SECOND MAN, it is fulfilled that "all things are put in subjection under His feet."

Surely this it is which is not considered in the present age; not only that Christians fall short of what they ought to be, but that they are content and well satisfied in doing so, because the notion of a higher and better state of life, and the necessity of it, is so much lost among us. So that not only is there a general falling off in practice, but also in principle: a very high and heavenly walk is not only not seen scarcely among us, but it is not held forth in the teaching of books or of Ministers as necessary, or desirable, or attainable. Very much has been said of late years, and is said, of human corruption; not in order to urge the necessity of our escaping from it, or being raised above it, but so that it has satisfied men in thinking that it will be a sufficient excuse for continuing as they are. The power of Divine grace is much spoken of,—not as a reason for our perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and working out our salvation with fear and trembling, inasmuch as an Almighty Power is vouchsafed to us in overcoming our corruptions during this the Christian time of trial,—but it is made an excuse for our lukewarmness and indolence in the things of religion.

Our LORD's expression, "Without ME ye can do nothing," is not indeed forgotten, because it is often in people's mouths. St. Paul's expression, "I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me," is as much spoken of as perhaps any text of Holy Scripture. But then these things are spoken of in what may be called a controversial or party way,—not with a serious consideration of all that they mean, or in connexion with all that we are taught in the Gospels,—but rather for the con-

trary purpose, in order to quiet the conscience in not seeking earnestly for higher degrees of grace and holiness, and intended as an answer to such doctrines.

These things may, indeed, be put forth by good and holy men with a right meaning, but then they are not thus taken up by others: people in general will always pervert and corrupt great and good principles, will wrest and turn them aside from the true meaning of Holy Scripture, according to their own evil hearts. For the multitude are evil; "the many" go the broad way that leadeth to destruction: and we know from Scripture that evil men cannot receive the truth or the knowledge of God; the truths of God they pervert and change according to their own evil hearts, so to keep their consciences at ease, and to excuse them in neglecting all the works of holiness. And moreover we know that many, and indeed most of us, are contented to receive the truth, not from the teaching of God, convincing us of sin and of judgment, but from the world around us, which is always ready to flatter and deceive.

Hence it arises that these high doctrines of Christian holiness and perfection have been in a manner lost to the present age, not only in our lives and practice, but the principles have been lost sight of—are forgotten; true heavenly-mindedness, being ascended with CHRIST, and seeking those things that are above, cannot be without being mortified and dead to the things of this world. Now, having our hearts in Heaven, and our affections and treasures there, sounds to us as a very happy life; we are not unwilling to listen to it, if it came to us of itself, for it were in fact but a pleasant dream. But when we consider what it really does of itself imply, that as we cannot have our thoughts in two places at once, nor our hearts, nor our treasures, but that having them elsewhere, of necessity implies that we cannot have them here; that we cannot truly have the joys of the SPIRIT and the pleasures of sense also, but that we must keep as much as possible from the latter in order to obtain the former; that we cannot have the peace of God which passeth understanding, while we are taken up with the cares or the temptations of this world;—when, I say, we consider how all these things are connected together, then we turn away, taking up some excuse which happens to be most popular at the time. We say, "This

is not the Gospel," meaning by "the Gospel" something that will make us at ease and comfortable in our minds, not that which would so much humble or mortify and subdue us as this doctrine,—the true doctrine of CHRIST Crucified. Or we say it is superstitious, as leading us to unnecessary fears; or that it is mystical and fanciful, because it has so much to do with the world unseen; for we like to consider religion apart from the other world, as something to make men decent and respectable, and agreeable neighbours to each other. Or we call it hypocritical, because men judge of others from themselves; and we are very slow to consider that others may have other and better objects in view, and better motives for their conduct than we have ourselves; and we know that we have no thought of raising our hearts to GOD only.

Thus it is that these doctrines of heavenly-mindedness and mortification, of power in CHRIST to overcome our corruptions,—these have been more entirely forgotten in the last age than they ever have been in the world. There are a vast number of things pertaining to these doctrines which might be mentioned, which have been set at nought by us in a way that they never have been by any other Christians in the world.

But what are the plain consequences of all this, which must meet the eyes of every body? First of all, the desolation of churches, until the last five or ten years, has been so great, as heathens would have been ashamed of, enough to bring down the judgments of GOD on any nation; while, at the same time, men have been increasing in wealth, and thinking nothing good enough or too costly to lay out on themselves. Indeed, the very existence of worship, and the face of religion at all, for more than two hundred years, has been kept up entirely by what had been left for the maintenance of the Gospel many hundred years ago.—The population increased, but no ministers, no churches, excepting such as were supported by those who died so long before. To such a degree has this spirit grown, that now for some years a Church Commission has been appointed to see whether what has been left by the good men of old might not be taken possession of, and so laid out as to save men of the present day from supporting religion altogether among the increasing population and wealth of the country; that the rich men of the

present day might not be asked to support the Gospel at all among the many thousands that labour for them, and by whose means they obtain their wealth.

Another plain fact, and one of the worst of all, has been the state of all orders of the Clergy; they have thought far more of living like men of the world, like respectable gentlemen, than like Apostles of Christ. Even the property of the Church itself committed to them they have not scrupled to hoard up or to spend in keeping themselves and their families in luxury, while they allowed the Church of God to lie waste. And all the while, it must be confessed, that were it not for the Dissenters, neither the Bible itself nor the Name of CHRIST would ever have been heard of by many thousands. Now, whatever may be said of the dangers and evils of Dissent,—and I am very sure that they are far more serious than almost any of us now imagine,—yet surely all these dangers to men's souls are to be in great measure put down to the account of the Churchmen of late years. The sin lies at their doors; and will find them out when God visits. If they had done their duty, Dissent would never have been heard of; the souls that are lost thereby must be required in great measure at the hands of those who considered themselves Churchmen, while they lived and died without ever having made any sacrifice to support the religion of CHRIST in the world. It may be that most of this may be owing to the State persecuting the Church, or, as Balaam of old, not venturing to disavow what it hates, endeavouring to destroy by corrupting it; but I enter not into the cause, I only speak of the fact.

But now, to come home to ourselves, let me ask all that are here present, or rather each one by himself, what ventures do you make for CHRIST's sake? what sacrifice do you make to keep up His Name and His Gospel? when you go to appear before God, how much will it be found that you have laid out for CHRIST's sake, in comparison to what you have laid out upon yourself? Is it one-half? is it a fourth part? is it even the Jew's portion, one-tenth? is it, I would ask a great many, one-hundredth part that you give to God, yearly or quarterly, or through your whole life? And yet churches are in a most miserable condition all around us: many more are needed, many more ministers; many Christians are there without churches,

many without ministers, many without Bibles; many thousands are there, even whole nations, who are not Christians at all; many die daily without ever having heard of the Gospel; many thousands go from this country, and then become heathens, because they have not the means of grace. Now, how much do you contribute yearly for any one of these objects, whether rich or poor? By your answer to this you may judge of how much your affections are in Heaven.

If you do not send even so much as the widow's mite to the end of the world to save a heathen soul, or to keep a Christian soul from perishing, yet, let me ask, what do you contribute towards CHRIST'S religion in the place where you live and die? How much do you afford, or have you given all your life, towards schools? how much towards keeping up the worship of God?

Now, it is a common saying, that facts are stubborn things; and these are facts which every one must know concerning himself. And then, no doubt, he must, too, know and confess that where his treasure is there his heart is also. When men first became Christians at the day of Pentecost, we read that the first proof they gave of their sincerity was in matters of money. It is not, indeed, the only point, but it is a very great and important one, in which each may by searching find out himself, and the way he is going, before it be for ever too late.

SERMON CCCXXVII.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

2 COR. vi. 16.

“Ye are the temple of the living GOD; as GOD hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their GOD, and they shall be My people.”

To know the meaning of the great festivals in the Christian Church, and to understand those great events which they commemorate, we must go first of all to the Old Testament, and observe by what figures and types these things were beforehand represented in the Law. In the same way as St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, explains all things in the Evangelical Church, by showing what was the figure which corresponded to them in the Church of Israel of old.

Now, the word Pentecost, which is the name by which this feast is known in the Old Testament, signifies fifty,—this being the fiftieth day after Easter, the day when the Israelites came to the mount of GOD; and the number fifty signifies the coming in of the Kingdom of Heaven, in like manner as the fiftieth year was the year of Jubilee,—the great Sabbath of years,—at the end of seven times seven. Whitsuntide, therefore, signifies the full coming in of the great Kingdom of GOD; wherein, by the coming of the HOLY GHOST, is fulfilled what St. John says in the Revelation, “Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and HE will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and GOD HIMSELF shall be with them and be their GOD.” It was also

called, "the Feast of Weeks," on account of the seven weeks being now fulfilled, or seven times seven days after the Passover or coming out of Egypt. "The Feast of ingathering" is another name of this great day; for as the first sheaf was offered at Easter, which was prophetic and typical of our LORD's rising from the dead on that day, being therefore HIMSELF called "the Firstfruits of them that slept," so at Pentecost was the full gathering in of the harvest into the Heavenly barn, which is the Church of God, whether visible or invisible. This was first fulfilled, when, as on this day, "three thousand souls" were added unto the Church. That was, as it were, the full ingathering of the Harvest in sign or symbol of the Resurrection. This also was foreshown in the observances of the Law which took place on this great day; for we read in Leviticus (xxiii. 17), "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two loaves; they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD." The offering of loaves of bread evidently represents, as it often does, Christian people. For as St. Paul says, "We being many are one Bread, for we are all partakers of that One Bread." As CHRIST at the Holy Eucharist is present to our souls in the offering of Bread, so the offering of Christian souls unto GOD is set forth in the Law by the firstfruits of the harvest in offerings of loaves of bread made with leaven; that is, souls imbued with Christian doctrine, which our LORD in the parable speaks of as leaven.

It is added in the Law respecting the keeping of this day, "And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish;" "an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the LORD." Now, the number seven is often put in Scripture for any great number, or rather for so many that there is no numbering them; as our SAVIOUR says, we are to forgive our brother seventy times seven; *i. e.* that there is to be no bounds at all to the number of times. And, therefore, "seven lambs without blemish" being offered unto GOD, seems to signify a very great number being as on this day brought unto GOD,—of persons being made like unto CHRIST; that as HE, the LAMB without spot, was offered up for us at Easter, so in the full coming in of the Kingdom there should be a great many who should thus offer themselves up "as living sacrifices" to GOD, being made acceptable to HIM

by the fire on this day descending from Heaven ; that is, the HOLY GHOST. For "our GOD is a consuming fire."

Such, therefore, is the explanation which Holy Scripture affords us of the meaning of the festival which we on this day celebrate ; and well may it be called "White" Sunday, as the day on which lambs without spot are presented unto GOD in order that His HOLY SPIRIT may descend upon them, dressed in white robes, as it is represented in the Book of the Revelation, who "have washed their robes and made them *white* in the Blood of the LAMB."

It is then the greatest gift that ever came upon man which we on this day hold in memory, that which was purchased for us by the Blood of CHRIST, and without which all that HE had done would have been in vain ; for we could not have been otherwise made fit to be where HE is ; and, although HE had opened Heaven for us, we should never have been able to enter there, unless at the same time that HE went to prepare a place for us HE had also, by His HOLY SPIRIT, come to prepare in us a place for HIMSELF.

Well may it be called White-Sunday ; for it speaks of that purity of the soul which is made white with blood,—made white, not by the brightness of the sun, but of that LAMB which is the Light of the City of GOD, whose raiment even here upon earth became shining with a Light different from the light of the sun, exceeding white as snow, "so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." And as they are made white, so must they continue ; for CHRIST says, "They shall walk with ME in *white* for they are worthy ;" and of those clothed in white it is said, that "they follow the LAMB whithersoever HE goeth." This "fine linen, clean and white," is, we are told, "the righteousness of saints."

All things, therefore, on this day speak of light and joy ; but as here below white raiment is not the transparent brightness of a saintly soul as in Heaven, but may clothe an impure and unclean heart, so there may be a light and joy which is not the light and joy of the SPIRIT, or connected with the love of GOD and man ; and, on the contrary, there may be a grief and sorrow which partake much more of the SPIRIT than such joy does. There are, indeed, many seriously thinking persons to whom

the thoughts of their Baptism, and the commemoration of it, and these great days of Joy and Thanksgiving, are connected with sadness; for they cannot but reflect how much they have fallen short of such vast blessings and gifts. Their souls are not, as it were, clothed with gladness even when the Church bids them to rejoice, but in sackcloth and mourning, and bowed down with the spirit of heaviness.

And, surely, the best among us have too much reason for sorrow, when they think on what they are, and what they might have been, if they had not neglected the gracious calls and assistances so lovingly offered to them by ALMIGHTY GOD. Indeed, a Christian congregation cannot be considered in these days as made up of those who have never forfeited or lost the gifts of the SPIRIT, nor fallen away from their high calling, and those who have done so; but rather men are, for the most part, divided in these days into those who are sensible of their great loss in this respect, and those who are not. There are none scarcely among us in these days who have not fallen away grievously from what their high privileges required of them, and thereby grieved more or less the good SPIRIT OF GOD; and some do feel and lament this their sad loss by past neglects in the bitterness of their soul, fearing exceedingly lest they should more and more lose that good SPIRIT, and be cast away from God's Presence. And the reason of this their concern is because the good SPIRIT is still pleading with them, still struggling with their evil hearts; and it is from the light of His Presence that they are made sensible of their own darkness and misery. But others, again, are but little or at all conscious of this their loss; if a cloud comes over them on account of their sins, yet it is but as the morning dew which passes away: they eat and drink, and are taken up with the concerns of this life; they do not at all know or consider how far they are gone away from God; they feel no anxiety or care to know. And this state grows upon them by degrees more and more, till the heart becomes hardened and their conscience asleep, so that, as it appears, nothing but the last trumpet of the Archangel can awaken it.

Now, I say, in the present day, men for the most part may be found more or less in one of these two conditions; some are in various degrees conscious of their sinful and corrupt condi-

tion, and take all pains to come to the knowledge of it, not excusing themselves either before God or man, but confessing, and fearing self-deceit and false flattering notions of religion; their great study being to cleanse their hearts, and so bring back the good SPIRIT they have driven from them. But of the greater part of mankind, the main object is to stifle and quench such painful thoughts; and their own corrupt hearts, and the world around them, and especially the wiles of the great enemy in various ways, will be ever ready to supply the means of doing so.

For these reasons it is the case that to many persons even Christian seasons of rejoicing bring with them many sad thoughts; for they feel truly enough that on these subjects, above all, they have occasion for sorrow; even like the Prodigal Son, when he was reminded of the great blessing which he once had in his father's house, and had lost through his own fault. So that they are inclined even less than others, in the words of the Collect, to "rejoice in His holy comfort."

And, generally speaking, this were indeed a right spirit and temper: but here again, as in all matters, something of self-denial must be the Christian's rule; the mercies of God are always occasions for rejoicing and thanksgiving even in the worst case; and especially so on those great opportunities when we are called upon with all Christians of every age and every country to give thanks for "the unspeakable gift." Then may the Christian forget, as it were, what he is in himself, and remember what he is in God, at this great festival, when it is said especially, "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast," to which it is graciously added, not only the children of God's promises, but also "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."

And, indeed, no other rejoicing but this, the fruit of a subdued and chastened spirit, is fit for such as we are: even in the Communion Service of our Church, which is the great Feast of Thanksgiving, we are taught to rejoice with trembling. The services of our Church are more marked with this tone and character than those of any other Church is now or has been. So that rejoicing in God's gifts is always connected with thoughts of repentance.

And blessed be Almighty God, Who has provided so wonderfully in His Gospel for every shape of distress in His people; coming HIMSELF, as it were, to bear their burdens, and take upon

HIM their afflictions ; that HE has most especially connected the consolations of His SPIRIT with a mourning and contrite heart ! “ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” they shall receive the Great COMFORTER. His voice itself for us is that of supplication and sorrow, for HE “ maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Even as CHRIST HIMSELF made supplication for us “ with strong crying and tears,” so does His SPIRIT also both in us and for us. It is His own most gracious declaration, “ The high and lofty ONE that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is HOLY, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Although HE is HIMSELF so holy and so high, yet the place on earth in which HE delights to take up His abode, is in the broken and contrite heart, in order to revive the same, after cleansing it by healthful sorrow.

If, therefore, we cannot wait upon GOD among the innocent and the good, yet very great and inestimable is the privilege if we may wait on HIM among the penitent. “ The sacrifice of GOD is a troubled spirit : a broken and contrite heart, O GOD, shalt THOU not despise.” Nay, wilt not only “ not despise,” but wilt prize very highly ; even so much so, that the very angels who see His face, and best know His will, do delight above all things in finding such a one among the children of men ; one who walks heavily and near the ground, as ever conscious of his past sins, and of the Eye of GOD, thinking them over in the bitterness of his spirit, so as to be very cautious not to approach near to the like again. And perhaps one reason why Almighty GOD speaks of HIMSELF and His angels rejoicing so much over such a one, is on account of its being so very rare. It was a memorable saying of a famous Bishop in old times, that it was easier to find a man who had not fallen from grace, than to find one who, after having fallen, had repented aright. And the same person thought, that the innocence and holiness of king David’s life in his former years, was not so remarkable and extraordinary as that he should have been able to repent so truly and so bitterly after his grievous fall ; that he should have had so much goodness of heart left, as to be able to recover himself after pollution so great. Because this was a thing wonderfully rare and un-

common, and the very greatest miracle of Divine grace. The light must have been very strong which was not put out by that cloud of darkness.

And the holy David himself may serve very well as a pattern of spiritual joy and comfort to those who would wish to repent before God, even as he did. For even in the very depth of his repentance, as is so strongly shown in the fifty-first Psalm, he holds so fast to the sense of God's goodness, that it overflows, as it were, over his dry and desolate heart, and continually mingles, with the very bitterness of his remorse, some drops of Divine consolation; so that in the very midst of his sorrows he says, "THOU shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; THOU shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which THOU hast broken may rejoice."

And surely they who exercise themselves in the works of repentance and mortification, do find therein greater comfort than this world hath to bestow; solid and substantial comfort, which, although it be no proof of final pardon and acceptance with God, no reason for high assurances and confidence, yet, so far as it goes, is a sign of His returning favour, a gracious encouragement from HIM to lead us on to greater degrees of repentance and humiliation.

Here, therefore, we may find the wonderful lovingkindness of God to His sinful creatures, even like our compassionate SAVIOUR HIMSELF, when HE went about in the flesh: that HE has provided so wonderfully for those trials which are the greatest of all,—the depressions of a wounded spirit, broken down by the righteous fear of HIM and His punishments, pierced through by the arrows of the ALMIGHTY, which drink their blood. For when we read in the Scriptures such an expression as this, "Ye are the temple of the living God," the temple in which HE lives, and in which HE walks, what are the thoughts of people in general? They consider it as a mere form or figure of speech, they do not attach much meaning to it; and whatever meaning it has, they set aside from themselves, as if it did not concern them. But others again, as they feel assured that every word of God must have a great and real meaning, far greater and more real than our thoughts can conceive or words express, so also do they know that that meaning must be one most intimately concerning

to themselves; and those who are in any degree thus minded, must, I say, feel something of concern and sadness when they are reminded of these great and awful truths; and especially on this day, when GOD came down from Heaven to take up His abode in the hearts of Christians; on this day, when especially the Church brings before us the Baptisms of others, not merely in order to obtain our prayers for them, and to witness their being received into the Body of CHRIST, but also, as the Prayer Book says, to remind us of our own Baptism. Now, what I would observe on this occasion is this, that to such persons who feel thus heavily laden, this sadness and sorrow may indeed be mixed with the most hearty thanksgiving for GOD's great mercies, and joy and gratitude for His wonderful lovingkindness; on this great Jubilee, which "binds up the broken-hearted, proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give them the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Only let us be on our guard, that such feelings do not pass away in a mere barren sorrow for sin, or in mere expressions or emotions of gratitude, like the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day; but that they should lead to some substantial amendment of life. They who are desirous to live like penitents for the rest of their days, so as, amid the chastenings of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, still to find joy and comfort in GOD, must make the whole course of their lives to be consistent with this spirit, otherwise it will be a false spirit, and such as will not support them in the day of trial or the hour of death.

And for this reason it may be well to mention some few short rules of life which may be becoming in this temper, and conducive towards it. First of all, such persons must be careful not to let their thoughts be taken up with any worldly occupation whatever, so as to forget GOD and their own true condition in His sight. If the employments they are engaged in are clearly His calling, then let them be gone about as His service; or if they are such as can be rendered subservient to His honour and glory, or the benefit of our fellow-creatures for His sake, then let this great purpose be constantly kept in view, with a single eye and undivided heart, especially by means of prayer to GOD respecting

the same ; otherwise we are sure to have our thoughts engaged and taken up in such concerns, and to forget that we are sinners.

Another observation may be made which is near akin to this, and part of this subject,—that we spend as little money as we can possibly help on ourselves and families, or what is still more to be guarded against, do not hoard or lay it up. For the warnings against this in the Gospels are so terrible, that a sincere penitent will feel that nothing but a very strong call of duty will allow him to incur such danger. Why it is so dangerous we know not ; why it so hardens the heart we cannot tell : it is a part of that great mystery or secret of iniquity ; but the warning voice of Scripture is, perhaps, on no subject so loud and so fearful, as on that of the possession of riches.

Again, eating and drinking to the full is another thing which the humble penitent is sure to find drives away from him the Spirit of heavenly-mindedness and the love of God. Every one, I say, will find that this does so for a time, that it makes him incapable of prayer and spiritual employment ; that it occasions him to become of another temper of mind than a poor penitent, craving pardon and forgiveness, and doubting of obtaining it, ought to be. And if every one knows that it does so for a time, what effect must this have when it becomes quite a habit ? how much must it sensualize the mind and harden the heart ? Of course it must ; there can be no doubt of it. The effect it had on the Rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, in making him careless of others and hardhearted, this same effect it must have in some degree upon all who never restrain even their lawful natural desires of meat and drink out of the love of God. I am not speaking now of drunkards or of gluttons, but of such persons who would desire to live as penitents before God, and recover again His good SPIRIT ; such as are sincerely desirous to be received again into their FATHER'S House.

Another point must be mentioned, which, on this subject, is more important than all that has been said, which is the forgiveness of injuries ; for on this, Holy Scripture represents the pardon and restoration of the penitent to depend more than any other. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" is the especial prayer of the penitent beyond any other, and must needs make him very anxious, strictly, and from

the very heart, to fulfil what is here required of him. It may be observed, that even amongst men nothing is considered to be such a proof of any one being in earnest in his repentance as love for his enemies, and the forgiveness of real or supposed injuries. And, indeed, the peace of mind which this produces, when accompanied with a thorough victory over a man's self, is one of the best gifts of the SPIRIT; the peace of GOD shed in the heart by the PRINCE OF PEACE; the last and best gift which HE bequeathed to His Disciples before HE departed. This character appears to be the nearest resemblance to CHRIST to which man can be brought on earth.

And all these things, so necessary in a penitent, are mainly important as subservient to another great point, without which no sorrowful spirit that is clothed, as it were, in sackcloth, can be girded with gladness,—and that is the habit of constant prayer. The true penitent will always endeavour to keep up that meek temper of soul which will be of itself like a silent prayer to GOD at all times; for all the actions of such a penitent are indeed like prayers to GOD, since, whether he forgives injuries, or gives alms, or mortifies the body, he is always as one who in so doing is asking pardon of GOD for his sins. His very actions, I say, are prevailing prayers with GOD. And as every one is glad of any opportunity to express with his lips what his heart most deeply feels, such a person therefore will be glad of set times for more direct prayer to GOD; not only at morning and evening, but also at various times of the day. Many persons even now, as they did in times of old, have rules and regulations for saying the LORD'S Prayer and Psalms and other prayers at several different hours of the day. Now this is, surely, not only a very old but a very good and holy custom, and it is what any poor man in his daily calling may practise,—any man, whatever his labour may be, may make a rule to himself to say the LORD'S Prayer (and, it may be, any other prayers he may remember,) at certain hours of the day, when he hears the clock strike, or has any other rule to remind him of this duty. Now, whatever may be said of this duty, of this I am sure, that he who practises it, would never find cause hereafter to repent of this custom. It might lead him on to things higher and better than now he thinks of. For GOD rewards liberally, and with abundant in-

crease; and in no way in this life does HE reward more truly than by giving greater degrees of grace. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect this to any repentant sinner who hopes for God's mercy, when so many by God's grace have been known to practise it. At all events, it is to be hoped that no Christian considers that prayer when he goes to bed at night, or rises up in the morning, is all that is to be expected of him.

Our hours are hurrying away very fast, and most of them, alas! running to waste, spent in ways that will do us no good when we come to die, nor bring us nearer to Heaven while we live. Is it too much to expect some part of these every day to be given to that end for which alone we were born?

Now, I will put this again to every one here present: you may never again see a Whit-Sunday; your next Whit-Sunday may be in that place where all opportunities of this kind will be at an end; why should you not begin to-day by some new rule of life that may be a comfort to you hereafter, and even throughout those everlasting ages that are to follow?

Every great festival is a stage passed in your Christian course; they who live the longest will not see many Whit-Sundays. They who do not pray at stated seasons do not pray at all; and yet on prayer all your life depends. It is impossible to pray aright and live wrong. Let this point then of prayer be gained, and let it be fixed and stated prayer. On what day could you expect a blessing on such a purpose more than on Whit-Sunday? GOD is pleased to tie HIMSELF to days and seasons, HE always did so of old; His great gifts were always bestowed on great appointed days. Depend upon it, that which you have no heart to do on such a day as this, will remain for ever undone. Once more I would ask, is it right, is it desirable, is it practicable? If it is all this, then why do you cast such a thought from you? If it is good, then however it may be spoken, it comes to you from the good SPIRIT; if His still and small Voice within you says it is good, then take heed how you neglect His Voice, lest HE speak not to you again—but in judgment.

SERMON CCCXXVIII.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

ST. MARK xvi. 16.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

WE must all tremble when we hear those awful declarations in the Athanasian Creed respecting the Catholic faith, such as, “Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.” And some are offended, and wish that these sentences were not there. But surely, as it can be abundantly shown that all this is true and certain, from Holy Scripture, and that our eternal salvation does depend on our rightly believing this doctrine of the Three Persons in One God, into which we are baptized, it is a very great mercy that the Church does bring it before us in this strong, and, it may be said, startling manner. As Christians, it is into this Name that we are baptized, with a profession and promise that we will believe all that is signified by that Name, as it is unfolded to us in the Apostles’ Creed. And we are all so apt to forget the great importance of this keeping “whole and undefiled” the Catholic faith, that it is extremely desirable for us to have it, from time to time, brought before us thus clearly and distinctly. It is probable—indeed, there can be no doubt of it—that many souls have been saved by having this thus strongly declared in the Athanasian Creed, which they have heard from their childhood.

But now, if it sounds to any one severe and uncharitable for the Church to speak in this way, then no doubt the same must be said of the Church of GOD in old times; and we shall find just the same difficulty with the Bible itself. The Old Testament, wherein we have the figure or pattern of GOD's Church set before us, is full of things quite of the same kind; of things that sound at first, to unthinking men in these days, as severe and uncharitable. And they would set them aside, and turn away from hearing of them, in the same way as they would from the awful voice of the Church now. Yet surely those ways which we read of in the Old Testament are the ways of GOD, and HE is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and all those things were "written for our learning." The case is, indeed, in some respects, altered now, in that we have a new law, the law of Christian love, which they had not of old. Yet still the same lesson remains in GOD's Word; and if we cannot explain it, or if it appears to us different to what we should have expected, yet we must not alter it, nor set it aside, nor explain it away, nor wish it was not there; but with faith and patience receive the whole truth as it is in GOD's Word, and endeavour to profit by it.

The circumstance to which I allude is this,—not only that the Scripture abounds with awful denunciations of GOD against sin and against sinners, but the manner in which GOD cut off, by means of His own chosen people, both single persons and whole nations. And that, too, in such a way, that those His servants who would show mercy and false tenderness against those whom GOD intended to destroy, fell themselves under His most heavy judgment. Those who pleased GOD executed His judgments without sparing, as did Moses, and David, and Solomon, and His Judges and Prophets. Thus, of Israel, under Joshua, when he destroyed Jericho, it is said, "they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old;" and of the nations of Canaan, that he "utterly destroyed them with their cities." On the contrary, GOD was so displeased with Saul, as to take away the kingdom from his family, on account of his unseasonably showing mercy when GOD commanded him to destroy. And, in like manner, king Ahab afterwards, when he spared Benhadad's life, and was reconciled to him, brought immediately upon himself the wrath of GOD, and lost his own life in consequence.

Whereas, of Samuel, the merciful and ever-interceding man of God, it is said that he "hewed Agag," the king of the Amalekites, "in pieces before the LORD." In like manner, long afterwards, we find that Jehu was approved and accepted of God, on account of his utterly cutting off all the children of Ahab, without sparing them; when he slew even those princes of Judah, as well as of Israel, which were related to the wicked family of Ahab: and it is recorded to his honour, how with great zeal and strictness did he cut off all the priests and worshippers of Baal. And the same severity we read of in Elijah likewise, that he slew them all at the brook Kishon. Now, all these persons were approved of God, because they did not show any mercy against His enemies. And every body knows, that in reading or hearing the Old Testament, things of this kind occur out of number.

But now, in the present day, when we Christians hear these things in the Old Testament, then we remember that CHRIST has given us a very different lesson to that which HE gave His people of old; inasmuch as HE says, "It was said by them of old time,"—*i. e.* under the Law,—"Thou shalt love thy friend and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you." God is set before us as full of compassion even to the evil, and we are told in this respect to copy the Divine pattern,—"Be ye merciful even as your FATHER in Heaven is merciful." We know that, for us Christians, all men are to be loved for God's sake; that even wicked men are to be looked upon with pity and tenderness, and with an earnest desire not to harm them or cut them off, but to do them good. And if, indeed, it be said that we must take part against God's enemies, yet, as to the enemies of God, it must be confessed, that every Christian who knows himself and his past life, must look upon himself as the greatest enemy of God of all that he knows, because he knows more sin of himself than he can possibly know of any other. On this account he has more reason to be angry with and to hate himself than any other; and a right sense of this will give him no heart to judge and condemn or to execute judgment on others. For we were enemies unto God when CHRIST died for us, and when HE waited so long for our repentance; and we also, after the same pattern, should be willing to do or suffer any thing to

gain over to their everlasting good those who are now the enemies of God.

Now, as all this, and a great deal more of the same kind, is to be said of our condition as Christians, that so far from executing vengeance on any, the greatest proof of our being true Christians is, that we do not for a moment harbour any thought of injuring another in any way; but, on the contrary, love our enemies as God hath loved us. And, therefore, when we hear these things out of the Old Testament, we all know it is not intended that we are to act in any way like those Saints of God who cut off the wicked with such unsparing severity, according to the good will of God.

But still the Word of God remains; it is read again and again “for our admonition;” it must mean something, and something to us; it must mean as much, no doubt, to us, and be as needful to us, as to any; indeed, far more so, for all those things that were written aforetime, were written especially for those who live under this last dispensation of all, for those, as says St. Paul, “on whom the ends of the world are come.” How, then, is this great difficulty to be explained? For we read that God’s Name is Love, HE is all love and mercy, and HE desires us to be so beyond all things; and yet, notwithstanding, a great part of His revealed Word consists in accounts of men destroying their enemies and His enemies, not only with His approbation, but with the strongest marks of His favour and acceptance.

Nor is this all; but what appears to many still more difficult and perplexing, that the book which God has, as it were, put into the hands of us all for our devotions in His Church and at home, and, we might almost call it, the Prayer Book of CHRIST HIMSELF, as being written by His SPIRIT, and so often used by HIM, —*i. e.* the Book of Psalms,—is full of the very strongest denunciations against our enemies and the enemies of God; whole Psalms are full of imprecations, others of prayers for vengeance. Now, how is this? It is said that we are to apply all this to evil spirits, our great enemies in this our spiritual warfare; and this is, in some sense, most true, and most profitable; we do and must so understand such passages. But still, this is not all they mean, surely. God’s words are full of very great and many

meanings, all of them infinitely holy, and good, and wise, and merciful. Yet still, all these heavy judgments and declarations in the Psalms, are spoken, in some sense, likewise of men; and if so, it certainly is a matter of some difficulty how we are to understand it; for who are we, it might be said, that are to use words of evil upon any men, alive or dead? Guilty sinners as we are, we ought to have no heart to entertain a wish or thought of evil against any man. This is, indeed, most true, as regards ourselves; but here comes the question, Why, then, does GOD put into our mouths, in His House of Prayer, such dreadful words respecting others, our fellow-creatures, perhaps no worse than ourselves?

Now, these things might, indeed, appear to us quite irreconcilable with all that we know of GOD's lovingkindness, might seem to be great difficulties and stumbling-blocks, if taken by themselves; but when they are set by the side of another vast and overwhelming doctrine, which is the very last of all that the heart of man is willing to believe, but is the great foundation of all revealed truth, then we see that all things wonderfully agree together, and support each other. The doctrine I mean is this, "That the wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the people that forget GOD;" that a great part of mankind will have to depart into a place of everlasting fire, notwithstanding all the lovingkindness and infinite mercy of Almighty GOD to us.

Set this beside these subjects that I have spoken of, and I do not say that it will entirely explain and make easy all these difficulties,—for who can ever understand GOD, or comprehend all that HE means?—but it will show that they are all one, and of a piece. If one is a difficulty, so is the other; they are but parts of one great truth: they teach us the infinite holiness of GOD, and how very much we need to tremble on account of that holiness. For it might be said, GOD is infinite love, therefore HE loves all that HE has made; and again, HE is infinite power, and therefore that HE can save all. But then HE is infinitely holy: HE wills not the death of a sinner, yet many die. These are the truths which we are likely to forget under this last dispensation, wherein this unspeakable love through CHRIST is revealed; namely, to forget the infinite holiness of GOD, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. For this reason the sacred

histories HE has given us are full of His judgments ; and the Psalms, by which we approach HIM, are full of declarations of wrath against the world, and all who are of the world, and take part with the evil one against God.

But now to this it may be said, in all these things which have been spoken of in the Old Testament, we read not only of the judgments of GOD, but of those being executed by men,—of men, as it were, joining in with GOD, and it seems made the willing instruments of His wrath : they take part with God ; they carry on His vengeance with a willing heart ; they pray that it may be fulfilled ; they are full of zeal, and even of indignation, as HE describes HIMSELF to be ; they glory and sing thanksgiving at their enemies being overthrown for ever and perishing. This is, indeed, very awful, very painful, it may be, and sad to us who feel ourselves guilty sinners beyond all ; we cannot enter into all these expressions respecting the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, or Sisera and the Canaanites ; we shrink from it ; we say the very words in the Psalms, as it were, with fear and trembling, knowing that they mean something, but scarcely knowing what. And this we cannot pretend fully to explain. But there is another great mystery which I will mention, infinitely more awful, and more difficult to understand, which, nevertheless, we believe ; and all these things go together.

On the great Day of Judgment, when the wicked are given over to eternal woe, there are none, we must suppose, among the Saints of GOD who will not have the companions, once loved, of this their pilgrimage upon earth lost in that great separation,—their own relations and friends, once most dearly loved, will have to go they know into the place of eternal woe ; and how then can it be supposed that good men, being full of love and mercy, can ever be happy, when those once dear to them are given over to such a doom ? Nay, how can they taste of peace and joy, when they know that misery so great has overtaken even their fellow-creatures, fellow-Christians, fellow-countrymen, and neighbours ? Now, this is a great mystery,—a difficulty which we cannot possibly understand ; but we believe and know that the good “ will go into life everlasting,” and “ they that have done evil into everlasting fire,” and that the righteous will on that day acquiesce and rejoice exceedingly in the just judgments of

GOD. And, therefore, we may see that if throughout the Bible we are taught of GOD to take part with HIM against the world and all worldly men, this is only the beginning of what it will be on the great Day of Judgment: we do not understand now how it is, but so it is, and so will be found at last.

And that all these things are bound up together, and that those expressions and histories throughout the Old Testament have some mysterious connexion with the final condemnation of the wicked, is evident from the same things, the same expressions and allusions, the same holy temper of righteous indignation being carried on in the Book of the Revelation; for there they receive their fuller spiritual application. And there we read of both Angels and Saints returning thanks to GOD on all His judgments that occur, and praying for the fulfilment of them. The four and twenty Elders fell on their faces, saying, "We give THEE thanks, O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, which art and wast and art to come; because THOU hast taken to THEE Thy great power, and Thy wrath is come¹." And, again, they "cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets; for GOD hath avenged you on her²!"

And the Martyrs under the altar who were slain for GOD's Word, although we know that they died after CHRIST's pattern, praying for their murderers, yet it is said, "They cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost THOU not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth³?"

Now surely this is a wonderful mystery, which it would be well for us to receive with all humility, and to learn from it this serious lesson, that while we labour beyond all things to love our enemies, and to do good unto the unthankful and the evil, yet we must be ever bowed down under a sense of GOD's unsearchable judgments against the wicked. Remembering that the judgments of righteous Samuel, the curses of holy David, the woes pronounced by our Blessed SAVIOUR, are all by the same SPIRIT that will on the last day place the judgments, and curses, and woes of GOD upon all the wicked; they are parts of the Day of Judgment and the beginning of it.

¹ Rev. xi. 18.

² Rev. xviii. 18—20.

³ Rev. vi. 10.

Since, therefore, Holy Scripture is so full throughout of what would sound to men of these days, if it were not there, as so severe and awful and uncharitable, it is quite consistent with this that the voice of the Church also should speak out in so very fearful and strong a manner, so as to offend weak and carnal men, respecting the Catholic faith. The same condemnation is, indeed, declared in various ways throughout Holy Scripture; but the Athanasian Creed puts it out with a loud voice, whereby the Church, like a kind mother, calls aloud to her child when she sees it sporting on the brink of a great precipice. The danger was all there before, but she declares it. Fire will burn, and water will drown, and he who falls over a precipice will be killed, although no one warned him, and, as it were, pulled him back rudely and forcibly from destruction: and so we find that the eternal danger is imminent respecting our not holding rightly the Catholic faith, although the Church of God did not in mercy ring it, as it were, aloud in our ears. And with regard to the declaration, that “without doubt he shall perish everlastingly” who does not rightly receive this faith, it is the very same thing which is declared in this text,—the words with which our Blessed LORD sent forth His Church even unto the end, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” He that believeth what? believeth, of course, That into which he is baptized,—the THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD; all which is signified by that awful Name and doctrine, and as it is set forth in the Creed: he that is baptized, of course, in the Name of the Blessed TRINITY, and he that believeth that into which he is so baptized; and “he that believeth not” means, of course, he that believeth not that great doctrine upon which the Church is built,—that CHRIST IS GOD, and the SON OF GOD, and the HOLY GHOST proceeding from the FATHER and the SON, and the like.

It is, indeed, said in this Creed, and in various parts of Holy Scripture, “they that have done good shall go into everlasting life, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire;” but here it is said, they that believe rightly, or they that believe not; as if this it was that made all the difference. And this no doubt must arise from this, that there can be no good works acceptable to GOD, excepting through faith in His Almighty Name; and that

there can be no true faith in the TRINITY, but that which is fruitful in saving works.

Man is himself made up of three distinct parts,—soul, and body, and spirit; he cannot live when one of these is taken from him: they are all bound up together, they cannot be separated and that he still should live. So likewise with the doctrine of the ever-blessed TRINITY, there can be no spiritual life in the soul when these are divided; all must go together, or we are dead.

But the only point I would here mention is, that this great doctrine must be received with great humility and fear, because it is so hemmed in on every side by the heavy judgments of God, that we should be extremely cautious in these days respecting every thing that leads in any way to our letting go this doctrine. There are very many ways that lead to it, which men little dream of when they enter into those ways. There are some forms of dissent which at first express an extreme horror at the deadly heresy of Unitarianism, as it is called, and yet have always, without fail, ended in it in a short space of time. Here evidently the fatal and wrong step was taken in the first instance, when they relinquished and made no account of our great Christian deposit and pledge of salvation,—the Creeds of the Church. The judgment of God followed after.

We must, then, I say, be very cautious and humble about this doctrine, making as much as we can of the Creed, saying it over daily with much fear and reverence, even as we would the LORD'S Prayer.

Some people have ventured to think lightly of the manner in which the Church keeps repeating continually the Apostles' Creed, as it has always done from the beginning; and also the Doxologies, "the Glory," as it is called, to the Blessed TRINITY: but surely these are wonderful protections provided for us by Almighty GOD. If these had been left off when worldly men have wished it, it is most likely that all of us who now meet together to worship the TRINITY in UNITY, and the UNITY in TRINITY, would have fallen into those errors of which the Athanasian Creed so solemnly warns us.

We little know what we do when we first let go the guiding hand of Almighty GOD; and it is a very great blessing to us

that His Church, in the great essentials of saving truth, is, in some sense, if it may be said with reverence, like her Divine AUTHOR, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Many has been the time when evil men have wished to change these things; and, after a time, then to change something else in an opposite way. But throughout all these variable changes of the world, and in the feelings of men, the Church continues for the most part unchangeable.

Where a Church has changed at any time on account of the sins of any age or nation, there she has suffered what must be in itself a very grievous loss; but still, as long as God keeps up within her, "whole and undefiled," the three Creeds, there the light still burns, the candlestick is not removed; there JESUS CHRIST still walks between the seven golden candlesticks, and there still is present the sevenfold SPIRIT OF GOD.

SERMON CCCXXIX.

CHRISTIAN FIRMNESS IN EVIL TIMES.

(PREACHED ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, 1843.)

PSALM xi. 3, 4.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
“The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in Heaven.”

IN the beautiful prayer which the Church has provided for her faithful sons as the Collect for this week, there is contained much matter for comfort and instruction.

With regard to the Collect itself, I may observe two things; the one, its remarkable suitableness to the present condition of the Christian Church; the other, that, in seven years, from 1843 to 1850, this is the only week that it is appointed for use in public Divine Service: it is not a prayer familiar to our ears and memories.

Nevertheless, all thoughtful persons will confess, that never was a time when it was more plainly required of all faithful Christians to implore ALMIGHTY GOD, for His dear Son’s sake, “that HE would keep His Church and Household continually in His true religion.” Nor, again, has there been a time when it has been more needful to entreat the GREAT SHEPHERD and BISHOP of our souls, that “they who do lean only upon the hope of His heavenly grace may evermore be defended by His mighty power.”

And it certainly is, as I said, worthy of observation by persons

who have faith enough to believe that nothing takes place by chance or accident; that in the whole course of seven years such a prayer should be assigned to the Church of England only just now, in the present emergency.

In like manner, it is impossible in reading the Psalms day after day to help observing what numberless passages, ever fresh, as it were, catch hold of the mind, and compel us almost to see how they not only seem, but actually are, meant for ourselves, for the instruction and comfort of Christian people whose faith is peculiarly tried.

Thus, in this 11th Psalm, we have, as it were, a description of a faithful heart in time of trial declaring itself resolved to trust on God alone, when some would advise it to fly or to draw back.

“In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” “The Christian,” (says the eminent Bishop Horne, in his commentary on this Psalm,) “the Christian, in perilous times, should make God his fortress, and continue doing his duty in his station. He should not, like a poor silly, timorous, inconstant bird, either fly for refuge to the devices of worldly wisdom, or desert his post, and retire into solitude, while he can save the cause in which he is engaged.

“Nor, indeed, is there any ‘mountain’ or strong place on earth out of the reach of care and trouble. Temptations are every where, and so is the grace of God.

“But, ‘flee to your hill,’ say the Christian’s mistaken friends; ‘for, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.’ So they represent to him his extreme danger, and then add, as if they thought his case even desperate, ‘If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?’

“Thus” (continues the good Bishop Horne) “did they discourage the faithful heart from making any farther resistance, by the consideration that all was over,—the foundations of religion and law were subverted,—and what could a man, engaged in the most righteous designs, hope to do when that was the case?”

“Such arguments” (says he) “are often urged by the timid in similar circumstances; but they are fallacious; since all is

not over, while there is a man left to reprove error, and bear testimony to the truth. And a man who does it with becoming spirit, (these are still the Bishop's words,) may stop a prince, or senate, when in full career, and recover the day."

Hear, therefore, the Prophet's reply to his advisers:—"The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD's throne is in Heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." Why, then, should man despair, who hath on his side holiness, omnipotence, and omniscience?

No man certainly need despair; but still, when the foundations are assailed, and perhaps (humanly speaking) destroyed, it is the plain duty of believers to consider what they ought to do; to consider how they may most effectually, under God's blessing, join hands (as the sacred poet says) with HIM in maintaining against the world the cause of "true religion in His Church and Household;" to consider, also, how they may really, not only with their lips, but in their lives, express their anxiety, "that those who lean not on any worldly arm, but only on the hope of God's heavenly grace, may evermore be defended by His mighty power."

If, for example, our lot is cast in times and places, when and where the Truth as such is slighted and set aside, it is easy to see that so far as such opinions prevail, the foundations are destroyed.

It is, I say, easy to see that if men once come to think that it is of small consequence whether or not they embrace and hold fast Divine Truth, they will, by degrees, go on to doubt whether there is any such thing as Divine Truth at all; and so, beginning with what they were pleased to call Christian Liberty, they will end in unbelief. And let no person imagine that this is an extreme case, and of rare occurrence; for there is no doubt that the number is very great and increasing, of those whose open disregard of truth and duty shows more decisively than any words can express, that the Apostle's description of the heathen but too exactly suits them, "Having no hope, and without God in the world."

In the consciences of such persons, though, perhaps, they are not at all aware of it, "the foundation is destroyed;" they have gone on so long denying plain truths, and slighting plain warnings,

that it might almost seem that in God's just judgment their faculty for discerning truth is, at it were, lost and wasted away, as a limb becomes paralysed and useless from want of exercise.

When persons have gone on, perhaps for years, calling themselves Christians, and yet in various ways out of number habitually neglectful of Christian Truth; to such persons that Truth is at last really of no value; they will risk nothing for it; they will make no exertion in its behalf; nay, rather, they will blame those who "earnestly contend" for it, as disturbers of the public peace, and who are troubling themselves and others with what is of little or no importance.

Wherever such opinions as these prevail, then, no doubt, whether men are aware of it or not, the foundations of all true religion are assailed, and, in a measure, destroyed. Or, to speak somewhat more particularly, if men high in station in Church and State should be led to encourage the opinion that God's most Holy Bible is to be handled, judged, criticized, praised or blamed, like other books, then, beyond all doubt, however human reason may triumph, Divine Faith will be undermined, and, by degrees, will be destroyed from its foundation.

In this respect, particularly, the Church's prayer is most suitable for her faithful members at this time; that they may be "kept in CHRIST's true Religion," so kept as to honour with transcendent awe and reverence all the sources and ways by which religious truth is imparted to us, and, in particular, the most Holy Bible, handed down to us by our Fathers, first in the Jewish, and then in the Christian Church, as a precious deposit to be preserved to the end.

But when men use the Sacred Scriptures familiarly and irreverently, forgetful of their AUTHOR, and endeavouring to subject them to the puny rules of human reason, then, surely, in their hearts the foundations of true Faith are loosened, if not destroyed; and, as the Apostle described the heathen of old, "professing themselves to be wise they become fools;" and born and bred in a Christian land, and amidst all Christian privileges, they realize the fearful description of the great lawgiver, judge, and prophet, "They grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness;" or of ONE greater than Moses, "If the light that is in thee be darkness,

how great is that darkness !” Surely, whoever remembers these and other such solemn warnings of GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT, will be fearful of taking liberties in any way with the Sacred Scriptures, whether of the Old or the New Testament ; especially he will shrink from the thought that he is competent to “ understand all mysteries and all knowledge,” or that he may safely venture to treat any part or portion of that most Sacred Book with levity or irreverence.

However, it is certain that if at any time there is a danger of such a profane temper as this prevailing in any Christian land, then and there, there is also danger that the foundations of the Faith will be injured, and in the end destroyed.

To sincere members of the Church of England, also, the question comes very forcibly in these our times of trial. “ If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ? ” I am not now considering what is the proper answer to this natural and momentous question, but only saying that the thoughts of serious Church people are already turned in this direction, and before long must be more so ; the direction, I mean, of inquiry into the nature of the Christian Church, and the duty of cleaving fast to it, more and more, as the world seeks to destroy its foundations.

And this undermining process is carried on by various forms of expression, which come at last to this, that some persons think the Church means any thing, and some think it means nothing ; but at all events, it is of no great consequence what it means.

In this way the very foundation is destroyed, at least in people’s minds, and that high, heavenly, mysterious Society, purchased by the Blood of the Most Holy JESUS, and built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, the SON OF GOD HIMSELF being the chief Corner Stone ; this Church, the Spouse and Body of CHRIST, even in a Christian land, is become (as the Psalm says prophetically of CHRIST HIMSELF) a by-word among, not heathens, but Christians, and the people, even Christians, shake their heads at it.

This might be proved and illustrated by many particulars. But persons of observation are well aware of the fact, which shows to what an extent the foundations are being cast down among us, and what need there is for us to pray to ALMIGHTY

God to keep His Church and Household continually, and in spite of all difficulties and enemies, firm, stedfast, and unmoveable in His true Religion.

To mention one more danger which thoughtful persons are well aware besets us, of a kindred nature to that just referred to, I mean the danger of mistaking or slighting the great Christian doctrine of Divine Grace.

Some persons are willing to think that it is no doctrine at all, in fact, that neither on this nor on any other subject there are, strictly speaking, any doctrines whatever in Sacred Scripture, nor in the Christian religion, and, in particular, that Divine Grace, and especially that said to be imparted in the most Holy Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,—that all these things are only inventions, inventions of a false and mischievous philosophy, which men may be forgiven for believing, certainly; but still they would do much better to shake off all concern about such matters, and attend to—one hardly knows what, for when the foundations are thus cut away, what *can* be left worth attending to? or where is the desolate craving soul to find comfort or support?

These are matters of a very touching kind to us all, whether we are aware of their importance or not.

And I will now only add, that it is a great mistake to suppose that religious difficulties of the kind I now refer to, are matters of interest only to the clergy, or to learned men, or people of leisure. No; whatever concerns the foundations of belief or practice, concerns all Christian people as Christians. For all alike, and not one more than another, are members of the Great Family of God, adopted into that family in one and the same holy ordinance of Baptism; and entitled to look for spiritual strength and refreshment in one and the same mystical Communion-Feast of the Body and Blood of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And as our privileges are the same, so are our duties. The graces of the Gospel, the same graces, are required as much in the rich, the learned, the honourable, as in the poor, the ignorant, the obscure.

Therefore, whatever concerns that Gospel, whatever touches religious Truth, is matter of consequence to us all equally.

It is of as much consequence to a poor child, as to a king on

his throne, that the Church he belongs to should be a true Church; that the clergyman who baptized him should be a rightly ordained minister; that the Bible he is taught to reverence should be the inspired Word of God.

In these great respects we are all equal, and the consideration should make people cautious of two things; first, not to pass over religious questions in a careless, slighting way, as if it were no matter of interest to them; and secondly, not to enter on arguments and disputes about such matters in a hasty, disrespectful manner, without considering either the solemn nature of the subjects they are discussing, or their own very great ignorance.

Remembering these two cautions, we may and ought to consider it a sort of duty, so far as we can, to ascertain where the Truth lies in the great questions which from time to time agitate the Christian world.

And our object in making such inquiries should not be a vain curiosity, and the fondness for the worst of all gossip,—religious gossip,—but simply the desire to know and to follow sacred Truth, to the glory of God, and the benefit of our own souls.

Then will God's HOLY SPIRIT bless our endeavours, and show us the good and the right way; and not only so, but give us strength to walk therein, with all humility and courage, even to the end.

SERMON CCCXXX.

CHRISTIAN FIRMNESS IN EVIL TIMES.

PSALM xi. 3, 4.

“ If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?

“ The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD’S throne is in Heaven.”

OUR thoughts have been directed on a former occasion to some of the peculiar difficulties which plainly beset Christian people of these times, and especially members of the Church of England.

For all persons of observation will confess that now, more than formerly, people are disposed to take liberties (so to say) with the most important and awful subjects—the value of sacred Truth,—the inspiration and Divine authority of the Scriptures,—the doctrine of Grace, especially as connected with the Holy Sacraments,—the nature and authority of the Christian Church,—these great matters are by so many positively set aside, and by so many more in various degrees slighted and neglected, that the prophetic question of our Blessed LORD might almost seem to find its answer in the present condition of (at least a great portion of) the Christian world, so called: “ When the SON OF MAN cometh, shall HE find faith on the earth ? ”

The case then is contemplated of the foundations being not only shaken but even destroyed, and in that case “ what can the righteous do ? ” how are sincere persons, those who are called in the Prayer Book “ religiously and devoutly disposed,” how are

they to conduct themselves? are they to be cast down with despair, to think that all is lost, that they have been deluded with false confidences? No; such is the reasoning of the Psalmist, come what may, there is the same Holy, Omnipotent, Omniscient God to defend and support those who trust in HIM: "JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD's throne is in Heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." And with regard to the peculiar danger which besets Christian people in our days, of slighting and undervaluing sacred Truth, the two following plain considerations are well to be remembered, by way of caution.

The first, that the Truth is in no way altered by the way in which it is treated. The other, that it is no matter of indifference, but of great consequence to each of us, to embrace and hold fast Divine Truth.

First, I say, we should remember, what no person surely can deny, that the Truth is not altered by the way in which it is treated. This is so plain, that it seems almost a waste of words to say it, and yet it is astonishing how little it is thought of, or acted on, by large numbers of Christian people.

Thus, how often do people speak and act as if they thought that an opinion is the more true for being popular, and the less true for being unpopular; whereas, in fact, this is a consideration which has nothing really to do with the Truth at all. For the Truth is somewhat positive and substantial, and remains the same, whatever people may think of it.

For instance, if an innocent man be condemned for a crime which he never committed, his being condemned does not make him ever the more guilty.

And, again, if a guilty person be acquitted, this does not make him ever the less guilty.

And yet people easily suffer themselves to be deceived in both these ways, though their reason and common sense, if they would have regard, must assure them that there is really nothing at all in such judgments.

And it is the same in the great questions of religious Truth. People are willing to persuade themselves, even against their reason and conscience, that the most important points of religious

belief and doctrine, are more or less true in proportion as they are more or less generally received ; though plainly, and in fact, this is a consideration which has nothing whatever to do with the question. Plainly and in fact, a popular opinion in Religion is quite as likely to be false as true ; and an unpopular one quite as likely to be true as otherwise ; if not more so.

But, as I said, people generally do not thus judge, but suffer themselves to be deluded with the idea, that opinions which are popular and generally received are, on that account, more to be depended on.

Now, amongst other bad effects following from this delusion, this is one, that the Truth, though not in itself altered, is yet altered in people's minds, and in them (as the Psalm says) its " foundations are destroyed."

Thus, it cannot be doubted that a very large number of people in this, and in other countries, have come to think that in Religion one opinion is as good, that is as true, as another ; whereby in *their* minds, plainly, the foundation of all truth is of necessity overthrown.

For on matters of that kind there cannot be *two* Truths. If any one stated opinion or view be true, every other must of necessity be false more or less. And this any one may see, who will consider the matter carefully and without prejudice. But people do not like to allow it, because they are afraid of being called bigots.

But it is better to be called that or any other reproachful name, than to renounce Divine Truth, to destroy its foundations in the minds of ourselves and others, and by our unworthy cowardice to realize in ourselves the sad description of the inspired Psalmist : " Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

For it is always to be remembered, that it is no matter of indifference, but one of great consequence to each of us personally, to embrace and hold fast Divine Truth.

If a person should be disposed to think otherwise, to imagine it matters little what opinions he holds, provided he is satisfied with them himself, let such a person call to mind places and passages such as these, set before him not by mortal men, but on the authority of our ALMIGHTY LORD and JUDGE HIMSELF,

passages in which the Truth is plainly declared to be of God, most precious, sacred and divine.

For example: the earnest unceasing prayer of the Psalmist:

“Lead me in *Thy Truth*, and teach me:

For Thou art the GOD of my salvation.”

“Thy loving-kindness is ever before mine eyes;

And I will walk in *Thy Truth*.”

“Shall the dust give thanks unto Thee;

Or shall it declare *Thy Truth*?”

“Let Thy loving-kindness and *Thy Truth* continually preserve me.”

“Send out Thy light and *Thy Truth*, let them lead me.”

With other like places, very many, out of number. To which may be added our Blessed LORD's prayer to His FATHER for His Apostles: “Sanctify them through *Thy Truth*, Thy word is Truth;” and that good confession (as St. Paul calls it) which HE witnessed before Pontius Pilate. “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto *the Truth*.”

In like manner we find the Apostles urging on the first Christians, in various ways, the like important doctrine.

For example: “By manifestation of *the Truth* we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD.” “We can do nothing against *the Truth*, but *for the Truth*.” “The Church of the living GOD is the pillar and ground of *the Truth*.” “The *Word of Truth*, the Gospel of your salvation.” “Love rejoiceth in *the Truth*.” “No lie is of *the Truth*.” “Glory not, and lie not against *the Truth*.”

Now passages of this sort are, you know, in a manner, out of number. And it may well be asked, how can any person who hears or reads them, venture to cherish in himself or others, the thought that it is of small consequence whether we hold the Truth or not?

Most rash, surely, and most presumptuous must it be to indulge such an imagination; and this the more, because the Prophecies of the Gospel have plainly warned those who have ears to hear the warning, that one peculiar trial of the Faith of Christians in the latter days should be this, the temptation to slight and neglect Divine Truth.

Thus, “In the last days (says St. Paul), perilous times shall

come;" and then, after a great many particulars showing the utter corruption that people, women as well as men, would sink into, yet all the while preserving a form of godliness, he concludes with these words, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of *the Truth*," yea, "resisting *the Truth*," "turning away their ears from *the Truth*, and turning themselves to fables," false and fanciful views of Religion. According to the prophecy of St. Peter, also, that "false teachers," that is to say teachers of false doctrine, shall increase in the Christian Church, "by reason of whom the way of *Truth* (*the Truth* orig.) shall be evil spoken of."

It may then easily appear to all considerate and unprejudiced persons, that it cannot possibly be a matter of indifference, but must of necessity be of the utmost personal consequence to every single individual to embrace and hold fast Divine Truth.

Therefore, if at any time in a Christian country the foundations of the Truth are destroyed or shaken, this, as I observed on a former occasion, is not a matter which belongs to the Clergy only, or to people of scholarship or of leisure, but it touches all who know and feel that all their hopes of salvation rest on JESUS CHRIST, and on the Truth of His Gospel.

It greatly then concerns the authorized ministers of so holy a Religion as the Christian, to press on the consciences of those for whom they must one day give account before the tribunal of God, —to press on men's consciences, I say, the infinite consequence of their embracing and holding fast Divine Truth, and the infinite danger of slighting and neglecting it.

The world indeed, alas! that it should be so, the Christian world so called, (at least in this country,) is very resolute in maintaining the contrary opinion. A very large number of persons dislike the Church of England for this particular reason, because it lays so great a stress on religious doctrines, in the Creeds, the Catechism, the occasional Services, the Articles, and indeed the whole Prayer Book. The secret reason of this no doubt is, that in the corrupt heart of man there is a secret natural dislike of Divine Truth, as such,—whilst the false liberty which we unhappily long for, seems most secure when we are clear of forms, rules, creeds, and doctrines, in short, all those safeguards which the Church of CHRIST from the very beginning has, no

doubt under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, provided in defence of Sacred Truth.

Against these foundations, the enemies of GOD and man are always diligently employed.

The devil, the father of lies,—the world, which hates JESUS CHRIST, though with a show perhaps of loving HIM,—and our own carnal wills, still averse to the restraints which the service of GOD would impose on them,—these with one consent oppose themselves to Divine Truth, and seek if possible to overthrow its foundations.

And therefore people ought to consider, when they find themselves inclined to think or speak lightly of religious truth or doctrine,—to say it is of no great consequence what a man's faith is, to treat the Creeds and other formularies of the ancient Church as things old fashioned, out of date, and useless,—Christians ought to consider that when they do so, they do in fact join with GOD's enemies in destroying the foundations of all Truth. And having considered this, they ought to beg of ALMIGHTY GOD for His dear SON's sake, pardon for what in times past they may have done wrong in this respect; for their carelessness and indifference about religious Truth, under the mask of being or being called liberal and charitable; and for the example they may have set others to follow them in these "their pernicious ways," as the Apostle says.

Some persons think, and apparently with reason, that this our country can no longer be properly called a Christian nation, and therefore see with indifference, or perhaps with approbation, the Jews, the blasphemers and crucifiers of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, admitted to the same privileges with Christians.

Whatever may be the reasonableness or unreasonableness of this opinion, no doubt its prevalence is a remarkable sign of the times, a sign that Christian men and Christian nations are beginning to express open indifference about GOD's Truth, and then the next step is to be ashamed of it, and the next to cast it off altogether. This is no over-statement, but must be quite evident to persons of observation and candour.

Be it our care, my brethren, to beseech ALMIGHTY GOD, for the sake of His Blessed SON, that we may be preserved from so terrible a danger, and be enabled to stand firm and unmoved in the profession of the Truth, "the Truth as it is in JESUS."

In the world around us the foundations may be destroyed, yea, in the Church itself many may make shipwreck of their faith; nevertheless, the foundation of GOD standeth sure. "The LORD is in His holy temple,"—the Church militant here below: "The LORD'S throne is in Heaven"—the Church triumphant above.

"In this quietness and confidence may be our strength." It is our high privilege as baptized and sworn Christians, to be able to see by Faith the arm of the LORD supporting his faithful servants, and never withdrawn from them so long as they remain faithful.

We are not therefore to leave the place which GOD'S Providence has assigned us, to desert (as some are not afraid to do) the Church in which we have been baptized, for the more enticing and popular services used among Roman Catholics, or among Dissenters of various denominations.

If indeed the Prayer Book were to be altered, and the foundations of Christian Truth weakened or destroyed by authority, then the question would naturally be, what can the righteous do? where can the sincere Churchman take refuge?

But so long as in belonging to the Church of England we can humbly yet confidently trust that we belong to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, so long we may have the inward peace and comfort which belongs to such a thought, and bless GOD for His great mercy to us who so little deserve it.

And then our great care and anxiety should be, not to have fresh signs and tokens that we are members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of His heavenly kingdom, (that we need not doubt,) but our anxiety should be, as St. Paul teaches in the like case, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called," to "build up ourselves in our most holy faith," to "adorn the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR in all things."

Now then, if the foundations are apparently being cast down around us, we are not to remain idle, inactive, and desponding, but to do what we can towards repairing them.

The cause of GOD'S Truth is entrusted to us all; every one of us in our several stations can be *for* the Truth or *against* it, and not only can be, but is.

As every person's conduct is of great consequence before GOD, and all will be brought to account, so every person has in a manner GOD'S Truth entrusted to him, in this way, that by our

treatment of it we cause it to be honoured or despised in the world.

If people are careless about religious Truth (as, alas! so many are) this injures the cause of Truth, and for the injury they must answer. If, on the other hand, persons are serious and in earnest about religious Truth as such, and take pains to ascertain it, and treat it with reverence and awe, and avoid as much as they can the society of those who treat it with levity and indifference, such persons no doubt have God's blessing with them, and in His good time HE will recompense them for their loyalty and faithfulness.

These are things for us to consider, especially in this time of peculiar trial for the Church of JESUS CHRIST, when the crafts and assaults of the great enemy are so vehemently directed against Divine Truth.

It is indeed certain, that too many, even of those who are called Church people, do not really care much for these things; for the way of Truth like the way of Life is narrow, "and few there be that find it."

But this is a reason why those who are in earnest anxious for the honour of God, and the good of their brethren, should stand forward steadily and resolutely in the cause of Truth, and not suffer themselves to be carried away from it by popular errors, however plausible, or to be alarmed by popular enmity or scorn, however bitter.

These trials are always to be expected, as well by Churches as by individual Christians, when they oppose the evil world, and refuse to bow down before its tyranny.

And we ought to think it a great honour, as the first Christians did, if in any case we may be counted worthy to suffer shame for the great Name of JESUS CHRIST, and to have our own name cast out as evil, for the sake of HIM, who is to us not only The Way and The Life, but also The Truth.

SERMON CCCXXI

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

ST. PETER'S DAY.

I PET. iv. 19.

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of GOD, commit the keeping of their souls to HIM in well doing, as unto a faithful CREATOR.”

WHEN the HOLY JESUS was about to remove His visible presence from this world, and to leave His Church in the charge of His Apostles, under the guidance of the unseen COMFORTER, although the promises which HE made to them were on the whole of a most consoling and encouraging nature, yet, too, HE gave them plainly to understand that they would be exposed to trials and sufferings in no ordinary measure.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated ME before it hated you.” “Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

“Remember the word that I said unto you, ‘The servant is not greater than his lord;’ if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” “They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God *service* :” service, that is to say, an act of religious devotion and worship; that he maketh, as it were, an offering to God.

And that those holy men found the warnings of their LORD fully accomplished in the course of their after-labours in the cause of the Gospel, there is abundant evidence from the Holy Scriptures,

and from the traditions of the ancient Church. For there is no doubt that they all spent the rest of their days in toil and sufferings, and all (with one exception) came to violent and cruel deaths.

Now it is in the very nature of "Suffering," as we call it, and indeed one great part of it, especially to persons of tender affections, that they are thereby led to look back on painful events occurring to them in past years, and, if they are well-disposed persons, the thoughts which give them the most pain are of former "sins, negligences, and wilful ignorances."

And no doubt the blessed Apostles had to endure this kind of trial, as well as the saints and martyrs who followed after them in succeeding ages of the Church.

When wandering as outcasts in foreign lands, when shut up in prison, when in daily or hourly expectation of torture or of death, amidst all the hopes which supported them, men so "clothed with humility" as they were, must doubtless have constantly checked all high thoughts and confidences with the remembrance of their own past errors and failings, especially such as they had fallen into, since they had become, first, disciples of the Most Holy JESUS, and then Stewards of His mysteries. Now we may easily imagine, that to one of strong and affectionate feelings, such as was especially that great Apostle whom the Church this day commemorates, this kind of trial would be peculiarly severe.

If, when in solitude or in prison, the words of our SAVIOUR, warning him of the sufferings he was to expect, must have constantly come up to his mind, doubtless in his deep humility more often still, and more painfully too, he remembered his own conduct, when on more than one occasion his faith had failed him.

In particular, we may suppose there were two cases of this sort which would be frequently or rather habitually present to his recollection. The one of these would be, his denial of his LORD and Master in the hour of his severest trial, the other, when even after he had received the HOLY SPIRIT at the great day of Pentecost, he was so influenced on an important occasion by the fear of men, as to act in a manner which brought on him the blame of his brother Apostle, the illustrious St. Paul¹.

¹ Gal. ii. 11.

The remembrance of these two events among others, would be of necessity very trying (as I said) to the tender affectionate heart of St. Peter, when in his latter years he saw fast approaching on him the fulfilment of his beloved Master's prophecy. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

"This spake HE, signifying by what death he should glorify GOD."

With this succession of trials (so to call it), trials past, present, and future, all pressing on him at once, how did this great Apostle act?—how did he, under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, advise Christians, in every age of the Church, to bear up against any sufferings of mind, body, or estate, which their Heavenly FATHER may think fit to lay on them? This is a question of solemn interest, and to it we find a full answer in various parts of this Divine Epistle.

"You are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Again, "Who is he (of evil men or evil spirits) that will or can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the LORD GOD in your hearts." And in this fourth chapter, urging them to consider the benefit of affliction. Remember, he says, that "he that suffereth in the flesh ceaseth from sin;" and what an infinite blessing is that! "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice in being allowed to be partakers of CHRIST's sufferings." And "let them that suffer according to the will of God," whatever suffering it be, of mind, body, or estate, let them "commit" or entrust "the keeping of their souls to HIM, as to a faithful CREATOR," faithful, that is, most worthy of all trust and confidence; this let them do, so trust HIM, not in inactive fruitless indolence, under pretence of our being unable to do any thing which can please GOD; he does not merely say, Commit your souls to your CREATOR, but Commit them "*in well doing,*" in real

endeavours after daily growth in grace and in the knowledge of CHRIST, daily improvement in holy desires, good counsels, and just works, daily more earnestly doing your duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call you.

This is St. Peter's advice to Christians involved in suffering of any kind, and especially, (which is to be observed,) as they become, humanly speaking, less and less able to do what is called 'any good' in the world, from weakness of health or of spirits, from the increasing infirmities of old age, from a crowd of fears, doubts, and misgivings, springing from various causes,—let none of these things hinder you from committing your souls to your Heavenly FATHER in real "*well doing*." For this, however poor and valueless in itself, will be surely accepted as the evidence, and the best evidence, of a true and living Faith in God's mercy through JESUS CHRIST.

Whenever, therefore, affliction or suffering befalls us from any cause, it is well that we look back on the time past of our lives, and consider in what respects conscience must justly accuse us of having denied our LORD and SAVIOUR. I mean, cases when we saw plainly our duty, but were ashamed to act up to it; when we had an opportunity of speaking a word in season for our MASTER'S honour, but through false shame neglected it; when we wilfully and deliberately refused to come when invited to the Most Holy Sacramental Feast of His Body and Blood; in short, in numberless instances when in conduct though not in word we have said each of us, "I do not know the man."

Now when conscience recalls such things to our minds, are we to sink under the recollection in inactive despondency? No, says the Apostle himself, "commit the keeping of your soul to God in *well doing*," and all will be right.

Again, when, in any like circumstances, the thoughtful Christian calls to mind the warnings and rebukes he has justly received in times past from kind parents, brethren, relatives, or friends, and especially from the Pastor whom the Providence of God had set over him, the recollection of such things is painful, especially to a well-disposed mind.

Nevertheless, there is no need at all for him to dwell on such recollections, except so far as they tend to encourage him in real "*well doing*," and to keep him far from all feelings of pride.

When this good effect is not produced, it is to be feared that there is more of indolence and uncharitable feeling, than of humility and a penitent spirit, in the temper alluded to.

It seems, then, to be certainly true, that under sufferings of every kind, the sincere Christian has an unfailing resource, namely, the path of daily duty, whether it be in the way of doing or suffering, for indeed it will consist in both doing and suffering, well doing and resigned suffering, each implying the other.

And if a person should say, No doubt I suffer ; but then how can I be sure that I suffer “ according to the will of GOD ? ” (and such alone the Apostle encourages in this passage,) to such an one it might be answered, If you do but “ commit yourself to GOD in well doing,” then you need not doubt that your suffering, whatever it be, is according to His will. Of this there can be no doubt.

Suppose, then, the case of persons living in times of peculiar trial, from the state of the Church in the country or neighbourhood wherein their lot is cast ; and that owing to divisions and excitements they sometimes are necessarily perplexed and in doubt about their spiritual condition and their duty, then the sacred rule of the Apostle seems to supply what is wanting to their need.

He seems to say, of course you are in doubt and perplexity, and you have no right to expect to be free from such trials, nevertheless you may be sure that they are laid upon you according to the will of GOD, and all you have to do is to commit the keeping of your soul to HIM in well doing, and HE will not leave you nor forsake you. HE will be to you a faithful CREATOR and SAVIOUR. Do not, therefore, seek for *feelings* of satisfaction and comfort, but rather seek how you may, from day to day, fulfil the direction to be “ well doing ; ” and with that evidence of your being in the right way you must be content. Of course it will be imperfect, and what the world calls poor, nevertheless it is safe and to be depended on ; whereas all other, however for the time apparently satisfactory to the reason, or gratifying to the imagination, will be found in the end less in harmony with Truth and that meek heavenly temper which is the most peculiar and fitting ornament of the Spouse and Body of CHRIST.

So, again, if persons are oppressed with family cares and diffi-

culties, owing to want of work, to sickness, and such like trials, which are so common as scarcely to take the attention of the world in the midst of its hurry and bustle, still the Holy Apostle's direction is valuable beyond price.

Your poverty, your sickness, your loss of friends, is according to the will of God; commit yourself to HIM then in well doing, and all will be right.

But in such a case (it may be asked) how can a man *be* "well doing?" Why, he can be on the watch for opportunities of accomplishing the duties of his station; he may fight resolutely with the sins which most easily beset him, and under which, as he knows by past experience, he is most likely to fall.

If he is inclined to be hasty and impatient, now he may practise calmness and kindness of temper.

If he has been envious of others' superiority, now he may learn to rejoice in that, and to be thankful for his own abasement.

If he has been ungrateful or intemperate in using the good gifts of God in eating and drinking and clothing, now he is even glad to be taught the severe lesson of mortification, which, but for the Divine chastisement, he would never have learned.

If in former days he has not known the value of good health and cheerful spirits, now he learns to bless God for condescending to teach him the value of such blessings by partially depriving him of them.

If he has leaned too much on earthly attachments and friendships, now he finds that such feelings are too often a snare to the conscience, and that no friendship is durable but that which is sanctified and supported by the HOLY SPIRIT of God.

All these things, and others like them, are instances of that "well doing," the necessity of which, St. Peter, both by precept and example, inculcated so earnestly on the first Christians when under various trials of suffering.

And not on the first Christians only, but on the Church of CHRIST in every age, did he lay this solemn and sacred injunction. To us, therefore, of these latter times, he speaks as plainly and as authoritatively as he did to the saints and martyrs of old. But he speaks only to those who will listen and attend to what he says, and who are resolved, by GOD'S Grace, earnestly to endeavour to fulfil it.

To such he speaks plainly his words both of solemn admonition and of heavenly comfort; of heavenly comfort, when he assures us that in all suffering, whether of mind or body, we may confidently venture to commit the keeping of our souls to **ALMIGHTY GOD**; and of solemn admonition, when he adds the emphatic words of caution: In time of affliction (says he) commit your souls to **GOD**, as to a faithful **CREATOR**; but ever remember that when you so commit them, it must be "**IN WELL DOING.**"

SERMON CCCXXXII.

OF HUMBLING OURSELVES UNDER GOD'S HAND.

I PETER V. 6—8.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of GOD, that HE may exalt you in due time :

“Casting all your care upon HIM ; for HE careth for you.

“Be sober, be vigilant.”

IN all periods and circumstances of life, but especially in times of trial and difficulty, from whatever cause arising, *Faith* must of course be the first of the first principles on which a Christian can build or rest. As “without Faith it is impossible to please GOD,” so without Faith it is impossible there can be true comfort or peace in the heart. It is therefore a great calamity, (in a certain sense the greatest of all calamities,) when GOD, in His severe judgments, suffers either a nation or an individual to become very weak in Faith, or perhaps almost or quite destitute of it ; when men are brought to the sad condition described by the Apostle, not only as “having no hope,” but even as “without GOD in the world.” When the hand of God is thus mighty and heavy, strong and irresistible, what is a nation or a person to do ? Surely, not to yield to feelings of desperation, not to go on in blind recklessness, wicked and miserable, but rather against hope to believe in hope, to receive such trials as GOD’S deserved chastisements, trusting that in His good time, sooner or later, (though perhaps it may not appear on this side the grave,) the cloud will pass over, GOD’S Name be glorified, and sinful penitents be pardoned and accepted.

Therefore, (says the holy Apostle,) who knew so well what it was to be weak in Faith, "Humble yourselves under the mighty," the strong, the heavy "hand of GOD," that "HE may exalt you in due time;" that when HE thinks well, HE may lift you up from your low condition, and bring you to that state of peace and happiness, which, though all naturally wish for, yet none can claim it as of right, in this place of trial.

And, proceeds the Apostle, taking up the ancient words of the holy Psalmist, "casting all your care upon HIM;" for whatever your own weakness may be, or whatever your faults and failings, still you need not doubt but "HE careth for you;" to imagine otherwise, to think that HE does not care for you, were most absurd, not to say unthankful and blasphemous.

But then, (he continues,) be cautious of mistaking the nature of this Christian resignation; it does not mean that we are to be presumptuous, nor yet again that we may venture to be careless or indolent. "GOD careth for you," (saith he,) why then, "be sober, be vigilant." "Be sober," *i. e.* having activity, steadiness, and what is called presence of mind in each emergency. Also, "be vigilant," self-denying, earnest, and on your guard.

Then "in due time," and when your patience and humility have been sufficiently put to the proof, you will for your Saviour's sake be pardoned, and even "exalted;" so exalted as to have no occasion to fear the being cast down any more. But that, perhaps, may not be in this world of chastisement and probation, but is reserved for a more perfect state of things.

The true Christian's temper of confidence, then, according to St. Peter's teaching, is essentially humble, patient, resigned, far both from presumptuousness and from indolence.

As to the fulfilment of our Christian duty herein, the Apostle's first plain rule is, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of GOD;" under His hand, whenever in any way it is laid strongly and heavily upon you, such is the force of the original word. And possibly it may have reference, among other passages, to the earnest supplication of the holy Psalmist, so familiar to our ears, "Take Thy plague away from me; I am even consumed by the means of Thy *heavy hand.*"

In whatever way, then, it pleases God to inflict His chastisements, (as HE has numberless ways of chastising us,) the Christian

knows at once whose hand it is that strikes each blow, and knowing this, he is so far, at least, satisfied. I say *so far* satisfied, because there still remains the painful reflection, that the punishment, however severe, is less than is deserved.

I consider, then, that this passage of St. Peter is one among many to which, in the estimation of a rightly judging mind, the powerful heavenly language of the Psalmist is most applicable; "More to be desired than gold, yea, even than fine gold"—to the Christian's taste, "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." At all times, indeed, such places wherein our great God shows such condescending tenderness towards us, are valuable beyond all price, but this value *comes out* (so to speak), and is of necessity seen, and felt, and acknowledged in seasons of peculiar trial, unless, indeed, men's hearts have become hard, and their feelings blunted by long intercourse with the evil world, or by false views of religion.

For each of these causes are powerful, (as we constantly may observe,) to deaden the feelings, and to harden the heart, and this even under circumstances when one would think such effects almost impossible.

In seasons, I say, of trial and perplexity, from whatever cause arising, the value of God's warnings is most deeply felt by the faithful penitent heart. To such an one the present times must of necessity be times of trial and perplexity, as all seriously-minded persons will confess, however they may differ in opinion as to the quarter from which the storm will come, or rather, I should say, is come. But the sincere penitent would rather avoid speculations and anticipations of what the result of these confusions will be, and receiving them as the just punishment for his own and others' sins, will hope for a brighter day, when heavenly Truth shall shine out as it were from behind the cloud, and God shall receive His faithful penitents to HIMSELF, to be separated from HIM no more. And God grant that it may be so with us. In the mean time, we may turn our thoughts for a little while to the particular view of our condition and duty in this respect, I mean, in respect of the need that Christians now have to "humble themselves under God's mighty hand," with entire resignation; far from all impatience and all presumptuousness.

Thus, it is certainly a very humbling thought, (no one will

deny it, at least no one whose heart is affected by any sincere sense of religious truth,) how GOD, speaking of old by His Prophets, said of His chosen people, not once or twice, that "they kept not the Covenant of God, and refused to walk in His Law;" that "they cast away the Law of the LORD OF HOSTS, and despised the word of the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL;" that "they were a rebellious people, lying children, children that would not hear the Law of the LORD." "They," saith the LORD, "have forsaken My Law which I set before them." "They have forsaken ME, and have not kept My Law." "They have turned unto ME the back, and not the face." "They are not humbled, even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in My Law." In short, "My people would not hear My voice, and Israel would not obey ME, so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations."

Now, I say, when one reads or hears such accounts as these, given again and again by ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF, of His own chosen people, under the former covenant, it is, I suppose, a common thought, and almost a natural one among Christians, to thank GOD we are not as the Jews were, to take for granted, as a matter of course, that because under the last covenant our knowledge and our privileges are so far superior to theirs under the first, therefore our spiritual condition, our condition before ALMIGHTY GOD, is the more safe and favourable.

Nevertheless, we all know very well, if we choose to consider at all, that what we so often hear in various ways is certainly true, namely, that the possession of Divine knowledge and of precious privileges will avail nothing, if they are made a bad use of.

But I should not say that they will avail nothing, rather they will bear heavy witness against us, will add fearfully to our guilt now, and to our punishment in that world where it will be too late to repent.

And if this be so, (and who can deny that so it is?) then who that compares herewith the condition of what is called the Christian world at this day, as well in this as in other lands, can help being filled with amazement and apprehension at the prospect?

For it really does seem as if we were come very close upon the

times so emphatically, in one short sentence, described, not by an inspired Prophet, but by the AUTHOR of Inspiration HIMSELF; "When the SON OF MAN cometh, shall HE find Faith on the earth?"

At this view, then, the penitent Christian, knowing where alone he can have any hope, feels that we can do nothing but "humble ourselves under God's mighty hand," His hand of severe trial and chastisement; for the severest of all chastisements is, to be let to go on in sin, error, or careless confidence. In this case, as in many others, our guilt is our punishment; I mean, to any one whose feelings are not quite blunted, it must be a very great punishment to be allowed to go on unchecked in any way which conscience whispers is not the narrow way, the way in which God's Saints have gone before us, taking up the Cross to follow the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And now if any person should be inclined to ask in what respects particularly we Christians of these times have need to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," I should make my answer according to the person who asked such a question.

If it were a person who preserving an outside show of religion, yet plainly in heart "cares for none of these things," surely I should think it vain and useless, and worse, to endeavour to reason with such an one on the great principles of Divine Truth; for indeed they are not matters which have occupied his thoughts or affections.

But if it were a person who is ready to cry out with one penitent in the Sacred History, "What must I do to be saved?" or with another, "LORD, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!" or with another, "LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom;" to persons, in short, whose hearts were *at all* softened for the reception of Divine Truth, to them some such considerations as the following might, with the blessing of ALMIGHTY GOD, be profitably addressed. And you cannot help observing, if you attend at all to the course of things around you, that *indifference* to Christian truth is one of the very peculiar signs of these latter times; and one that is becoming rapidly more and more plain and undeniable. Now you see there is something very painful and humiliating in the mere thought of this,

that after the lapse of nearly eighteen hundred and fifty years, the Word of Eternal Life, the Gospel of our salvation, should have so faint a hold even on what is called the Christian world, that very great numbers, (and those numbers daily increasing) of those who profess and call themselves Christians, are yet really quite indifferent about all the essentials of Christian truth. Now, besides other considerations, this is a very *humbling* thought, and shows that the hand of GOD is very heavy upon us. Otherwise HE would not leave such numbers of people so to themselves, would not let them go on from week to week, and from year to year, slighting and disregarding His revealed truths, just as if they were (true perhaps, but) of no value.

I would not go so far as to say so, and yet, perhaps, one might say, that it is better to be an infidel than an indifferent person; because an infidel might, perhaps, from some cause or other, become alarmed and shocked at his condition; and having nowhere else to flee to, might run for refuge to the Cross of that SAVIOUR whom he had long denied.

But the indifferent person is less likely to be alarmed, because he is no unbeliever, no blasphemer; and the world around him very confidently assures him, that in religion sincerity is every thing, that one opinion is as good as another, and that any thing is better than being bigoted.

You see, then, what reason we have to "humble ourselves under GOD's mighty hand," when, with all our professions as a Christian nation, the very elements and first principles of Christian truth are, by the great majority, accounted mere matters of entire indifference, "which neither if we heed are we the better, neither if we heed them not are we the worse."

I do not say that people make *profession* of this indifference, but their practice shows what their real opinions are more decidedly than any words could do: and therefore I repeat it, well may penitent Christians of these days "humble themselves under the mighty hand of GOD," and beseech HIM to open our eyes to the truth of our condition, that is to say, to its dangers.

Another painful and humbling consideration to a penitent heart, is of the prevalence, and apparently the increase, of what may be called a temper of "*unfeelingness*," if there were such a word, a want of sympathy and tenderness in people's intercourse

with each other : a temper this, I may say, of all others, almost the most opposite to that exemplified in the conduct of our adorable LORD and MASTER, and of His saints and martyrs in the Primitive Church.

Now, there seem to be two reasons why this kind of unfeeling hardness, which, perhaps, may be comprehended under what St. Paul calls "want of natural affection," and which, he said, should particularly prevail in the last days of the Church,—I say, there seem to be two causes why this unhappy temper should be likely to show itself more and more in what is called the Christian world.

The one is, because, in the Christian world alone, there is at work (in any great degree) the spirit of enterprize. Almost all the wonderful undertakings and inventions, all the improvements in arts and sciences, in navigation, and printing in particular, all these almost have come from Christian nations. Such is the fact, and a very remarkable one it is. And these inventions and improvements are still going on ; nor can any one say to what limit they may reach. And though they are indeed GOD'S good gifts, yet the misuse of them causes a selfish speculating temper by degrees to leaven, as it were, the mass of society, (for covetousness and selfishness are wonderfully infectious,) and so with the Christian name of worshippers of GOD, we are in danger of becoming a heathen nation, worshippers of Mammon.

For you must remember that, as among holy and religious persons even bad men are made better, so among the unholy and irreligious even good men are made worse : and therefore in such a decayed and ruined state as we are in, (I mean as a Christian nation,) it is not to be wondered at if even good sort of persons too often, without being aware of it themselves, become gradually, yet really, selfish, unfeeling, hard-hearted.

This is one cause for the prevalence of so baneful a temper. Another cause seems to be, (and if it be at all truly alleged, it is certainly one greatly deserving the consideration of all seriously disposed persons,) that disputes and differences about *religion* tend greatly to make persons unkind and unfeeling ;—and unless persons lead a life of devout holiness in all respects, of incessant communion with ALMIGHTY GOD in prayer, and in the often receiving of the Holy Communion of their SAVIOUR'S BODY and

BLOOD,—unless they lead such a life as this, they are nearly sure to become harsh and uncharitable, if they enter at all into matters of difference and discord on religious subjects.

It is, indeed, one of the plainest signs that the hand of God is heavy upon us, that in so many instances good people are estranged from each other; that unkind names and distinctions are kept up; that people are more anxious to show to the world that they do not belong to such or such a party, than to serve God faithfully from day to day, and “to do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them.”

In this respect, then, the sincere Christian penitent of these times will feel and acknowledge that he has great need to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. He will feel and acknowledge both, that oftentimes his zeal has got the better of his charity, and that he has forgotten the warning of the Apostle, that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” He will also feel and lament that, in repeated instances, he has not made sufficient allowances for other men’s trials and difficulties, but judged hastily, and condemned bitterly, when there was far more reason for pity and forbearance, or, perhaps, even for approbation and imitation.

But, however, there is no doubt that a temper of coldness and unkindness among those who ought to be of one heart, and of one mind, who profess belief in the same SAVIOUR, and hope to meet hereafter on His right hand; when such as these are estranged from each other, and the estrangement is (so to say) prevailing and increasing, then we may be quite sure that the hand of God is indeed heavy on us, and that if we do not humble ourselves under it, we must expect some more severe and signal evidence of the Divine displeasure on such a Church or nation.

Now, in things which are evil, as well as in things which are good, the effects of men’s conduct follow on like the links of a long chain. When indifference prevails in the great mass of society, then, among those who have some sense of religion, though possibly a very erroneous one, there will prevail too much bitterness and unkindness. This, again, gives encouragement to the scoffer and the profane, who are not sorry to have some apparent reason for getting rid of all religious restraints:

and then, lastly, comes in the infidel, triumphing, as it were, over the ruins of all that is good and holy.

I have said a few words about the two first of these,—indifference and unfeelingness ; and now, with regard to scoffing and profaneness, let any one who is at all aware of what is going on in the world only judge whether, in this respect also, all faithful penitents have not great need to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Many persons are not aware of the extent of this spirit of scoffing and profaneness among all the orders and degrees of society among us ; among lords and gentlemen oftentimes as well as among what are called the middling and lower classes.

But persons are not aware of the prevalence of this scoffing profane temper, for two reasons. Some, because they have not the means or opportunity of observing what is going on, as is the case oftentimes with poor people ; and gentlefolks and clergymen do not like to see and acknowledge any thing so shocking ; they shut their eyes to so painful a truth ; they wish to think that every thing is going on very well and comfortable, and, for all they know, people are as good and religious as they need be, or, at least, as can be expected.

Thus, you see, poor people *cannot* see the extent of the danger which surrounds us, and gentlefolks *will* not ; and between both, the voice of God and His Holy Church, is (I may almost say) utterly disregarded ; while that of the mocker and blasphemer is permitted, nay, encouraged, to such a degree in large towns and cities, and through the country in popular publications, that no reflecting person can doubt,—no person who has at all seriously and devoutly set his heart to the truths of the Church and Gospel of JESUS CHRIST,—no such person can doubt, that this open profaneness in a professed Christian nation must, of necessity, sooner or later, bring down the just judgment of God upon us, and therefore, that before it be too late, in this respect also, we have special need to humble ourselves under His mighty hand.

But, now it will be said, that very often people do not “ mean any thing,” when in conversation, or in other ways, (such as in newspapers, and magazines, &c.) they give utterance to this kind of profaneness and blasphemy.

But do they not know Who it is that has said, "That of every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment?"

And if "idle words" are to be so strictly accounted for, what shall be said for words of blasphemy, and profane jests, often against the Bible itself, and very often indeed against the Church, and the Church Prayer Book? For people to say that they do not "mean any thing," when they give utterance to such language as this, or when they read, or suffer others to read, books or papers wherein such things are, they show themselves cruelly indifferent to the honour of ALMIGHTY GOD, and to the everlasting good of their fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians.

But, chiefly, they give hereby the greatest encouragement to the spirit of infidelity, which is far more common amongst us than good persons are aware of, both among rich and poor people. And then, if the infidel looks to the Christian world, (so called,) to the ways of those who are really in earnest, more or less, in their profession, and sees in some so much practical indifference, even on high and essential points of truth, and in others so much bitterness and unkindness, so much party spirit of one towards another, then the two things together, the one's indifference about the truth, and the other's unfeeling hardness, make him (as is said of the false Jew¹) "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart;" though I have really no faith, and am without GOD in the world; though I have really no fears of hell, nor hopes of Heaven.

Now, GOD forbid that we, my Christian brethren, should *wilfully* encourage this dreadful increasing tendency to infidel practices and professions. Still we have need to be on our guard, lest we should incur this guilt, unknown to ourselves; and this, for the present, I leave to the consideration of those who are disposed to be considerate.

¹ Deut. xxix.

SERMON CCCXXXIII.

COVETOUSNESS.

(ST. MATTHEW'S DAY.)

1 TIM. vi. 10.

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

THE Church this day holds in grateful remembrance the illustrious Apostle, Evangelist, and Martyr, St. Matthew. And in the Collect appointed for the day, we are taught to make it our especial prayer that “ALMIGHTY GOD would grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the LORD JESUS CHRIST.” For here, as in other instances, the Church would instruct her faithful children to seize hold (as it were) of whatever statements, characters, or events are recorded in the histories of past times, and most especially in the Scripture history, and to make them serve to our own edification. And particularly, we are instructed to make such matters the subject of our *prayers*, that by them we may be put in mind to seek to GOD for strength to follow after all that is good and right, and to renounce and cast off all this evil.

Thus, to mention a few instances out of many, of this *manner* of the Church's teaching.

On St. Andrew's day, and also on St. James's day, we are

reminded by what is said of those two Apostles, how greatly it concerns us, *without delay*, to give up ourselves to follow the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And this is the prayer of both the Collects. The most remarkable circumstance recorded of St. Thomas gives occasion for a prayer, that ALMIGHTY GOD would give us perfect unprovable *faith* in His Blessed SON. The martyrdom of St. Stephen teaches us to pray that we may be enabled in every case, to *love and bless our persecutors*; and that of the Holy Innocents, to pray that we may be enabled to glorify GOD by *Innocency of Life*, and constancy of Faith, even unto death. The eventful history of St. John the Baptist warns us to pray that we may be enabled "truly to repent according to his preaching, after his example constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake." And to mention no more, the consideration of St. Matthew's original employment or *business*, (as we call it,) and of his conduct when our SAVIOUR called him to follow HIM; this suggests the devout and earnest prayer, that we, each of us, like that holy man, may have grace to forsake and keep clear of all covetous desires, all inordinate love of riches, and faithfully to follow the same MASTER which he did.

Thus does the Church teach us to turn every circumstance into matter for Prayer, and especially circumstances in the histories of the Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs of the Primitive Church: reminding us, as it may seem, that we have the same Arm to protect and support us which they had, and that, whatever our difficulties may be, they are no greater than holy men before us have had to undergo.

To-day our prayer is particularly against all covetousness, because it appears that the Apostle St. Matthew's trial lay particularly in that way. He was, we read, a Publican, that is, a gatherer of taxes for the Romans, an office in which people often acquired great riches, and sometimes, perhaps generally, not in very honest ways. Accordingly, it is said of Zaccheus, that as he was chief among the publicans, namely, in that particular district, so "he was rich;" and it is added, that when he began seriously to think of following our Blessed LORD, the two things which chiefly grieved him were the thought, first, of his want of charity to persons in distress; secondly, of his having acquired much of his wealth by

unfair, or at least questionable, means. Therefore, with regard to the first, his confession was, "Behold, LORD! the half of my goods I give to the poor;" and with regard to the second, "If I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold." And how acceptable this was to HIM who knows the hearts, we are immediately assured when our SAVIOUR so solemnly pronounced the gracious sentence; "This day is salvation come to this family. Behold a true son of Abraham!"

Very like Zaccheus seems to have been the character and conduct of St. Matthew. For he too, no doubt, was a chief publican, and was rich. Yet when our LORD called him even from the receipt of custom, the very midst of his occupation and his gains, he followed HIM at once. We must, of course, suppose that St. Matthew had *before* given serious attention to the miracles and preaching of the HOLY JESUS, and had made up his mind to obey HIM implicitly. So when the trial came, he made no objection, but at once cast off all hindrances, being the first to realize the prophetic instruction of Isaiah long before in the Old Testament, describing, as it seems, the times of the Gospel.

"Who is blind, but my servant?
Or deaf, as my messenger that I send?
Who is blind as he that is perfect?
And blind as the LORD'S servant?"

Thus was St. Matthew deaf to the calls of the world, and blind to all its enticements, renouncing all selfish, covetous feelings, and only holding to and loving one Master, JESUS CHRIST.

As, however, time went on, and the number of the disciples was multiplied greatly, some were found who, though like Matthew and Zaccheus in profession, were not willing, like them, to renounce all for CHRIST'S sake, but vainly endeavoured to serve GOD and Mammon both at once. Of such inconsistent Christians, the Apostle St. Paul makes indirect mention; writing about thirty years after our LORD'S Ascension, as if he "stood in doubt of" some persons, whom he does not expressly name, but no doubt St. Timothy knew whom he meant. "There are some," he says, "who suppose that gain is godliness;" that Religion is a sort of trade or business, or way of getting on in the world: "from such withdraw thyself." "For they that *will* (or desire to) be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and

into many foolish and hurtful lusts (or fancies), which drown men in destruction and perdition." "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they erred," wandered away "from the Faith," the pure truth and doctrine of the Church and Gospel of CHRIST; and not only this, but even failed of their own poor low notion of reconciling the love of GOD with the love of the world; and instead of securing to themselves a comfortable easy life, "pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Now, whenever the love of money gains the ascendancy in any person's heart, the effects, though always evil, yet are not always the same. Thus, sometimes it makes persons morose, cross, and suspicious; and their behaviour, and almost their look, is as if they thought every body they had to deal with was a thief or a cheat. With other persons, this love of money has a different effect, they seem frank, cheerful, and active, quite full of business, and scarcely heeding small losses, provided they can secure great gains. Hence, sometimes, they appear to the world and even to themselves, as liberal and generous, being in fact very far from any thing of the kind. Again, sometimes this love of money makes people hate *all* Religion, even the very name of it, partly because it is coupled in their minds with the notion of expense, and partly because it calls off their thoughts from the idol of their hearts, their beloved money. And on the same principles, sometimes covetous people will go to a considerable expense, in order to indulge themselves in luxuries, bodily comforts, and pleasures, I mean by way of keeping all serious thoughts out of their minds. And other things might easily be mentioned, confirming and illustrating from our daily experience, the solemn warning of the HOLY SPIRIT, that "the love of money is the root of all evil," that is, of all *sorts* of evil, both in the hearts of individual persons, and to society in general.

We may further observe, that it is not the possession of riches which constitutes covetousness, but what is so emphatically called by St. Paul, the "love of money." Now there may of course be the love of money in the heart of the poorest person, as well as in that of the most wealthy. And this is to be observed because people generally, when they talk of a covetous money-loving person, mean one who has got something laid by. But

this no doubt is a mistake. Therefore we have all need, whatever our circumstances are, to guard against this disposition; and it seems to be with a view to our danger in this respect, that our Blessed LORD gave those strong and plain rules of caution, "Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added." "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." "Be not of doubtful mind,"—and St. Paul's warning, "I would wish you to be without carefulness." Now this is to be observed: because sometimes we are inclined to think that we should be sorry indeed to be covetous or any thing like it, but that we may and ought to be full of carefulness and anxiety about worldly matters. And yet it seems, that this kind of disposition is near of kin to covetousness, and like it to be carefully watched and guarded against by all faithful Christians.

It is also very observable what St. Paul states as one of the evil effects of the love of money, that it made believers err from the Faith, wander away, and be seduced from the true doctrine of the Gospel. For it seems from this, as if there were something in a covetous, worldly spirit, quite opposed to the restraints of the Church and Gospel of CHRIST. And so indeed we too often see it to be the case in these latter days, when covetousness and a worldly temper is so often the reason why Christian people will depart wilfully and resolutely from the ancient faith of CHRIST'S Gospel, and rules of His Holy Church.

But, alas! their money and their careful anxiety will bring them no solid comfort or peace. "They pierce themselves through with many sorrows." And even if they should get through this life with apparent success, and being well to do (as it is called), yet, on these principles, what will they have to look to beyond the grave? Indeed to such persons and tempers, the very solemn warning of GOD by the Psalmist, may seem to be particularly applicable.

"When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away:
His glory shall not descend after him.
Though while he lived he blessed his soul:
And men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.
He shall go to the generation of his fathers:
They shall never see light.
Man that is in honour, and understandeth not,
Is like the beasts that perish."

Such then being the sad history and end of covetousness, be it our earnest prayer to our Heavenly FATHER, that HE would ever keep us, and all belonging to us, from so dreadful a sin and fall. To this purpose, and to have our life and conduct consistent with such prayers, we should always endeavour to set the true value on our earthly possessions, be they little or much. I say the true value, because we must not fancy that what we have is of no worth, and that it signifies not how we spend it, or what we do with it. Rather we should consider all that we have as a sacred deposit, for the right use of which we shall be strictly accountable.

For if we ourselves are not our own, (as St. Paul expressly teaches,) then of course all that we call belonging to us, is not our own either. All belongs to our Heavenly FATHER, and HE entrusts it to us, to prove and try us thereby, as means whereby to discipline and train our affections, and to make us learn by practice, how all should be done to His honour and glory.

It is indeed easy enough to see that this rule is true and of great importance, to be followed by all Christians. But, alas! it is any thing but easy to put into practice with energy and consistency. Yet it is our duty to endeavour after this temper and practice, however feebly and with small success. For on the one hand, covetousness and a worldly mind is so dreadful an evil, that we cannot too zealously and resolutely flee from it, nor look behind us, like the righteous man flying from the wicked city. And on the other hand, however feeble and small the results of our endeavours, yet we may humbly hope that the good SPIRIT of GOD will pity and bless us in making them. By degrees too, and as time goes on, we may hope that HE will enable us to rise more and more above earthly cares and anxieties, and at the same time (as I said), to think not less but more of the true value of money, or any other possession, comfort, or blessing, however small, here entrusted to us. For on this as on other subjects belonging to Christian conduct, we must always remember that whatever we say, think, or do, any of us, is of great importance, indeed we know not how great. Therefore, though we must not distract our minds with useless fears and anxieties, on this or any other point, yet we ought to be seriously and sincerely careful, to act always as in God's sight, and, as much as possible, with a view to that great and strict account, which we shall all have to give at last before our SAVIOUR and Judge.

S E R M O N C C C X X X I V .

C O N T E N T M E N T W I T H M E A N T H I N G S .

R O M . x i i . 1 6 .

“ Mind not high things,
But condescend to men of low estate.”

or, [Margin]

“ Mind not high things,
But be contented with mean things.”

It has on former occasions been suggested to you, that the readings placed on the side or (as it is called) the *margin*, of some editions of the Holy Scriptures, are of great importance, and much to be considered by persons who wish to have anything like an accurate knowledge of God's written word. For (as any one may easily understand), in translating the Bible out of Hebrew, Chaldee, or Greek, into English, there must have been of course a very great many passages, or at least words, about which the most learned might doubt what was the best way of rendering them in our language; and of two ways both might be equally correct. So the translators (like faithful men as they were) consulting only the edification of CHRIST's flock, put down *both* the senses in such doubtful places, one in what is called the Text, and the other in the Margin, that in the margin being (suppose) of exactly the same authority, neither more nor less than the other. Thus, to call to your observation one or two instances out of many,—instances, where it certainly seems that the translation put in the margin is the most accurate, and best to be depended on.

One place is (and it is a passage every way of great importance) in that divinely eloquent account of the privileges and duties of a Christian, given by St. Paul in Heb. xii., from which his practical conclusion is, "wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" but, instead of "let us *have* grace," in the margin it is translated, "let us *hold fast* grace," which doubtless conveys the meaning more distinctly, and is equally to be relied on as a correct translation.

Another place is, in the brief history of the practices of the Primitive Church at Jerusalem, stated in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ii. 46. "They, (as Jews,) continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and, (as Christians,) breaking bread from house to house;" how from house to house? rather, as it is translated in the margin, "breaking bread at home," that is, celebrating daily the Communion Feast of their LORD'S Body and Blood in that special large upper room, which HE had consecrated by His Blessed Presence at the last Passover before HE suffered, and which was to them more than any other earthly home.

And, to mention another passage, among many which might be alleged, where St. Luke says, in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel, and at the twentieth verse, that the Pharisees demanded of our LORD, when the kingdom of GOD should come; His answer was, "The kingdom of GOD cometh not *with observation*;" of which translation it may be said, that it is, at least, by no means so plain and easy to be understood as that in the margin: "The kingdom of GOD cometh not *with outward show*."

The last instance, which I need now point out, is this admonition of St. Paul, addressed to Christians who lived, not in some obscure out of the way place, but in the proud, wealthy, luxurious city of Rome, and among people who above all things abhorred whatever is mean and low in the eyes of the world.

The Apostle, having urged on these Roman Christians the necessity of their cultivating various eminent graces, in consideration of the high privileges which as Christians they enjoyed, gives them also this brief plain direction, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." 'Of course, (it might be said,) this is an admirable Christian rule, and particularly suitable for persons in high station to attend to. It

is very proper for such to be humble and condescending; but, for us, who are in a middling or low station, such a rule was not intended; it does not concern us.' Now, to any one who would so reason, it might well be said, look to the translation in the margin, and you cannot deny that that, at least, contains a rule and a warning suitable for us *all* to learn, whatever be our rank, station, or condition. "Mind not high things, but be contented with mean things:" and this, you will remember, is quite as much to be regarded as conveying the Apostle's meaning, or rather, I should say, as conveying the warning of the HOLY SPIRIT speaking by the Apostle, quite as much part of GOD'S revealed word, as what we commonly read. Therefore, allowing the one translation to be good, we have the liberty to think this in the margin to be equally so; and we consider it to be a Divine warning and rule addressed to us all, as Christians, "Mind not high things, but be contented with mean things," "mean," that is, poor and low, for such is the proper sense of the word.

As a warning, considerate persons will easily perceive how greatly Christians need to be reminded of the necessity they are under, *as Christians*, of "not minding high things," and of "being contented with" poor, low, "mean things."

The word here translated, "being contented," or "condescending," is rather a remarkable one, and seems to be used only on two other occasions throughout the New Testament, which two places seem to explain and enforce its meaning here. One is in the Epistle to the Galatians, the second chapter, where, at the thirteenth verse, St. Paul is speaking of the evil effects of St. Peter's too tender regard to the Jews; "insomuch, (says he,) that Barnabas was *carried away* with their dissimulation,"—readily and willingly yielded to the popular opinion. Which gives this meaning to St. Paul's words in the text, "Mind not high things, but *readily and willingly*, and by preference, go with what is poor, and low, and mean." The other place alluded to occurs in the second Epistle of St. Peter, the last chapter, and almost the last verse, where, the Apostle having warned the LORD'S flock of the dangers they were in from their various spiritual foes, thus concludes: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, *being led away* with the error of the wicked, fall from

your own steadfastness." Here the words, "being led away," mean, "being willingly seduced," and with your eyes open (as we say). And this, again, shows St. Paul's use of the same word in the text to have this force: "Mind not high things;" do not trouble or think about them, but go quietly on without doubts or fears in this respect, entirely "contented" with poor, low, "mean things," and seeking nothing more.

That such is the force of the passage, there can be no doubt. The difficulty is, how most effectually to put in practice this Divine rule and warning; for, as I said before, greatly indeed do we all need to be reminded of its importance.

For instance: as baptized Christians, we are sworn followers of JESUS CHRIST; and Baptism, be it remembered, besides being the means and pledge of our spiritual birth, does also, as the Church expressly teaches, "represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, and to be made like unto HIM." Now, every one knows, that in the account of our adorable REDEEMER'S life and conduct, nothing is more wonderful, nothing put more prominently forward to catch the attention of those who are disposed to be attentive, than His lowliness and meekness. To this HE HIMSELF, (contrary to His usual custom, if one may so say with reverence,) to this special grace, as manifested in HIMSELF, HE drew the attention of His hearers, when needing comfort and encouragement, "Learn of ME, (said HE,) for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find refreshment to your souls." In like manner, the inspired Apostle: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS," where the expression of "*the mind*" that should be in us, is the same both in the original, and also in our translation, with that in the text, "Mind not high things," that is, let not your temper or disposition, your habit and course of life, be toward them; but, remember HIM, "who, though HE were in the form of GOD, and thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, yet emptied HIMSELF of all His glories, and took on HIM the form of a slave, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross." Thus, the ETERNAL SON of GOD, for our sakes, "minded not high things," but did indeed most wonderfully "content HIMSELF with mean things;" "condescend," indeed, "to men of low estate." As His followers, then, and His disci-

ples, we are bound by every motive of gratitude to HIM, or love for our own souls, to follow His example of meekness and lowliness of heart ; to be like HIM, with no mind for high things, no temper, disposition, or love, open or concealed, for the distinctions of this present probationary scene. Rather, setting all such vain imaginations aside as impertinences, and what, by our very profession, we have no concern in, we should study and practise all the most suitable ways of obtaining, through the promised aid of the BLESSED SPIRIT, what St. Paul so emphatically calls, " the mind of CHRIST."

To this purpose it is especially needful for us to realize and bring out in our every day practice the admonition contained in the last clause of the passage we are now considering, namely, " Be contented with mean things."

Which teaches us, at least, thus much :

That we should keep down all views of vain ambition, all aspiring thoughts of being superior to others, in greatness of any kind, in learning, riches, skill, station, dignity, or any, in short, of the things which this world most prizes.

Not that we should lead an indolent, listless, spiritless life, quite otherwise ; for the Apostle, in this very chapter, says, it is required of Christians that they be not " slothful in business ;" but then, this our zeal and energy must not be spent on vain projects of personal ambition, but simply directed to the glory of GOD our SAVIOUR, and the benefit of that Church, which HE purchased with His own most precious blood. Also, to be " contented with mean things," implies that we must be well pleased to spend an obscure, neglected sort of life, out of the eyes of the world, as one may say ; not seeking in any way for applause or admiration ; not desiring to have what is called influence, but preferring rather to be meanly accounted of ; provided always that this disposition does not arise from any want of charity, concealed pride, or sullen moroseness, or any other form of ill temper. " Contentment with mean things," as it will keep down all the pride of riches, and make persons who are well off in this world remember HIM, who, for their sakes, became poor, and had not where to lay His head ; so it will reconcile poor persons to their life of trial and suffering ; for a life of trial and suffering is surely very often their lot. I say, poor Christians, who have learnt to

be contented with the mean things, which GOD has granted them, are, if they did but know it, among the happiest of the sons of men : for, they are like the Prophets and Apostles, the Saints and Martyrs of ancient times, whose death, we are told, was precious in the sight of the LORD ; nay, more, they are like the Ever Blessed SON of GOD HIMSELF ; like HIM in worldly circumstances ; and if they are but like HIM “ in mind,” too, (as the Apostle says,) the time will come when they will bless their poverty. However, for all, there is but one rule. All must be “ poor in spirit ;” for none but the poor in spirit shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of Heaven. Also, if we would follow the Divine rule, to “ be contented with mean things,” we must learn not to mind being treated with neglect or contempt. To mind such kind of treatment is an evidence of an unregenerate heart, of a heart not thoroughly imbued with the love of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the desire of following His example, who when HE was mocked, spitefully entreated and spitted on, endured all without repining, and endured it too for our sakes. And further may be mentioned, as one of our trials, whether or no we are disposed to be “ contented with mean things” when, in spiritual matters, and what is commonly called our “ religion,” we are willing to rest satisfied with small sensible consolations, or even with none, provided we may only hope that we are doing or suffering according to the will of God.

Some good persons talk of ardent feelings and strong inward emotions as evidences of a state of grace. And indeed it is no wonder in a corrupt world and an oppressed Church, that kind-hearted Christians do seek for these kinds of external encouragements. Nevertheless, they are not to be trusted to, as is too often found by experience. They are the consequences of walking by sight, not by faith, contrary to the Divine rule. They make persons inclined to “ mind high things,” to be ever seeking after what shall excite and lift up their feelings, instead of making them contented with mean things ; namely, what shall edify their hearts, and substantially improve their practice.

In this sense, the ancient rules and teaching of the Church are oftentimes considered as “ mean things,” poor, unspiritual, unsatisfying. And perhaps (as I said) it is no wonder that they are found so, considering into what a condition we are fallen.

Nevertheless, let *us* be contented with these mean things, just for the present, hoping that the time may come, when light shall shine out of gloom, and they that diligently seek God amidst every discouragement shall find that their patience and their labour was not in vain. For, in this view, we ought all to “mind high things,” or, (as the same word is translated in the Epistle to the Colossians,) to “set our affections on them”—even on the highest things—the things above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD. *In this sense*, we should *not* “be contented with mean things,” “things on the earth,” but pray and endeavour from day to day to be more and more alienated from them; so as really to care not what befalls us, so long as we may but be approved of HIM in whose Name we were baptized, and who we believe will come to be our Judge.

SERMON CCCXXXV.

GOD'S WILLINGNESS TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS.

(*TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.*)

ISAIAH lxv. 24.

“Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

IN the divinely beautiful Collect, appointed this week to be used, we make humble acknowledgment to our Heavenly FATHER, that HE is “always more ready to hear, than we to pray.” Thus do we at once confess our own great sinfulness and unworthiness, and His astonishing condescension, His infinite compassion and tender love. Our sinfulness and unworthiness appear in this,—that we should be so backward and unwilling to address ourselves to HIM, who is alone worthy of all our adoration and confidence: and His unbounded compassion appears in that HE is, notwithstanding our coldness, still ready to hear us; waiting, as it were, anxiously for any expressions of our love towards HIM, according to His own gracious promise long ago delivered by the mouth of His Prophet,—“Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

When we consider, with any seriousness, what our condition is, how low and degraded, how frail and helpless, and then turn our thoughts upward to the infinite perfections of the Great GOD, our CREATOR, SAVIOUR, and only PROTECTOR; when we consider these things with the least seriousness, we should rather expect

that creatures such as we, possessed of the powers of reason and reflection, and enabled to look forward, in some degree at least, to the consequences of things,—that we should at once, and for ever, renounce all inferior objects, and place our whole hope, trust, and confidence in HIM, who we know is ever watching over us for good ; in other words, that we should be always as ready to pray to our God, as HE to hear our prayers. However this was, in reason, to be expected beforehand ; it is but too certain that the event has been found to be much otherwise. Our God is “ always more ready to hear, than we are to pray.”

That mankind, in general, should show themselves thus regardless of their true interests ; that in this, as in other respects, “ man being in honour, should have no understanding,” that is, serious consideration, “ but should be like the beasts that perish ;” this is, indeed, lamentable, and humiliating to reflect on ; but, when we further call to mind the sad truth, that the conduct, in too many instances, of us, “ who profess and call ourselves Christians,” is so unsuitable to this our high calling and profession, in this respect, especially, that we are but faintly impressed with the sense of the obligation, or, I should say, necessity, which is laid upon us, to lead a life of prayer and communion with God ; when we deeply and seriously think of this, and press the matter home to our own consciences, what can we say for ourselves, what excuse can we make, or how shall we answer for our presumptuousness in the great day of account ? “ The Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner !” Such, doubtless, should be our shame, such our remorse, when we reflect how regardless we have been of our only Friend ; that our readiness to pray to HIM has been, at the best, but faint and imperfect, and little proportioned to His more than fatherly anxiety to hear our petitions, and to grant them too, so far as may be consistent with our real, eternal good.

It was, we see, one of the high privileges prophesied and promised of old, to Christians, “ inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven,” citizens of the New, the Heavenly Jerusalem, that none of their “ labours should be in vain in the LORD ;” that HE

would ever watch over them for good; that HE would be ever waiting (as it were) and hearkening for opportunities of shedding His blessings on them.

“They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble. For they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

This privilege is promised and offered to ourselves; such is the love and anxiety of our gracious GOD for our souls. But the great, the serious question which we ought to put to our consciences, is whether the possession of such a privilege, the knowledge of our being, to so great a degree, the objects of the Divine love and anxiety, whether these thoughts affect our hearts and practice at all as they should? whether we live, in any proportion, as persons to whose supplications the ear of the ALMIGHTY OMNISCIENT JEHOVAH is ever attentive?

It is observed by the great and good Bishop Jeremy Taylor, “that in all instances of Religion and Providence, in all GOD’S merciful dispensations to us, except only the incarnation of His SON, GOD hath not given a greater argument of His willingness to have us saved, than by rewarding our prayers with so great blessings as HE has promised to them. It is a work so easy, so honourable, and to so great purpose . . . The prayers of men,” he continues, “have saved cities and kingdoms from ruin: prayer hath raised dead men to life, hath stopped the violence of fire, shut the mouths of wild beasts, hath altered the course of nature. Prayer made the sun to go from west to east, and the moon to stand still, and rocks and mountains to walk; and it cures diseases without physic, and makes physic to do the work of nature, and nature to do the work of grace, and grace to do the work of GOD; and it does miracles, miracles of accident and event, (that is, no less wonderful evidences of GOD’S power than what we specially call miracles,) and yet Prayer, that does all this, is of itself nothing but an ascent of the mind to GOD, a desiring things fit to be desired, and an expression of this desire to GOD as we can, and as becomes us. And our unwillingness to pray is nothing else but a not desiring what we ought passionately to long for; or, if we do *desire* it, it is a choosing rather to miss our satisfaction and felicity than to *ask* for it.”

To these general observations of that illustrious prelate, the Chrysostom of the British Church, let me add two particular considerations, to which at present we may limit our thoughts on this great and touching subject. First, how great must be the ALMIGHTY'S love and anxiety for us, if he set forth HIMSELF, as HE does in Scripture, as watching, listening, and hearkening after any signs of a disposition in us to seek and serve HIM!

And then, how truly fearful must be that person's condition, who when his Heavenly FATHER is so ready to hear, yet will not pray, will satisfy himself with any excuse or pretence rather than devote his heart and life resolutely and in earnest to the practical love of God, and habitual communion with HIM!

The confession which we make in this week's Collect, that our GOD "is more ready to hear than we to pray, and that HE is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve;" with the supplication following, "that for our REDEEMER'S sake HE would pour down on us the abundance of His mercy, forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and give us those good things, those eternal Heavenly blessings, which of ourselves we are most unworthy to ask;"—this confession, I say, and this supplication, are quite in harmony with the great doctrines of the Gospel, as might easily be shown by reference to numberless passages in the books, as well of the Old, as of the New, Testament. Hence we are led to acknowledge and feel the unbounded greatness of the ALMIGHTY'S love to us, his anxiety for our substantial good, His tender fatherly fear (if we may so speak with reverence) lest we should persist to neglect HIM, and so at last, after all that has been done for us, fall into utter and irrecoverable ruin.

For let all serious persons only consider how great degrees of love and anxiety for us is expressed in these few words. "Before they call, I will answer,—while they are yet speaking," that is, before they have finished making their request, "I will hear,"—"hear," that is (according to the usual sense of that word in the Old Testament), I will attend to their request, and grant it, so far as may be expedient for them.

Here the ALMIGHTY LORD of Heaven and earth represents HIMSELF as watching with anxiety the hearts and consciences of us His creatures, His sinful creatures; as listening after any the

least expression of penitence, so it be sincere; as having joy in any symptoms of returning love in the cold and hardened heart; and as granting His gracious aid and encouragement even to those who have wandered the farthest away from HIM, if only they will acknowledge the error of their ways, and come to HIM with sincere penitent hearts; sincere, I say, though possibly, or, rather, I should say probably, weak, faltering, and unsteady.

Such is the force of those two Divine parables of the Blessed JESUS, namely, of the lost sheep, and the lost piece of money; "there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;"—and that strong thrice repeated expression, "Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD;" the joy, namely, of HIM who wouldeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. No doubt there is much belonging to this subject that is high and mysterious, yet it seems to be the plain doctrine of Scripture, that as the Great GOD is "grieved" (it is St. Paul's expression) by our sins and follies, so does HE "rejoice" when HE perceives in us the signs of penitence; according to the most energetic language of the Divine parable, "When he was yet a *great way* off, his father saw him coming, and *ran*." How unbounded then, how devoted and unceasing ought to be our love, our filial affection and gratitude to our Heavenly FATHER, who, in all our neglect of HIM, treats us with forbearance so astonishing, and watches and looks and longs, as it were, for some symptom of our making to ourselves "a new heart and a new spirit," and when any such symptom does appear, and the prayer of faith and penitence is but whispered by us, "before we call, HE will answer; while we are yet speaking, HE will hear,"—HE will attend to our petition? When, I say, we reflect on this, when we consider what forbearance and parental anxiety the Great GOD of Heaven shows for us,—for each one of us,—our hearts must indeed be hardened, our natural affections deadened by long intercourse with a cruel deceitful world, if we feel not at least some desire to be worthy to be called the sons of so kind, so tender, so good a FATHER.

But if the mercies of the LORD will not lead us to HIM, yet surely His terrors should in all reason alarm us. God is not mocked with impunity. Truly fearful then must be that person's condition, who when his Heavenly FATHER is so ready to hear,

yet will not pray; will satisfy himself with any excuse or pretence rather than devote his heart resolutely and in earnest, to the practical love of GOD, and habitual communion with HIM. Prayer, we know, does not consist in any formal repetition of words, nor in any vehement excitement of the feelings. This is plain; for a person may say over the words of a prayer, without thinking or endeavouring to think at all of the meaning. And also persons may have their feelings strongly excited by what is or appears to be religious fear, joy, or hope, and these feelings vented in the *language* of prayer, and yet after all the heart may not pray. "Prayer (as the eloquent Bishop describes it in the passage before referred to), Prayer is nothing but an ascent of the mind to GOD, a desiring things fit to be desired, and an expression of this desire to GOD as we can, and it becomes us."

The question, then, which it so concerns us to put impartially to our consciences is, whether we in this sense do habitually endeavour to pray? Whether, in the midst of the daily cares and business of life, our minds habitually ascend to our GOD and SAVIOUR, and with HIM continually dwell; whether our desires, hopes, and wishes are in the right direction, namely, towards GOD and Heaven, and heavenly things; whether we habitually express these our feelings and affections in such ways as our Heavenly FATHER has directed and sanctioned, namely, by the practice of deliberate, earnest, importunate prayer.

Among the various ways by which our merciful GOD has enabled us to ascertain and discover the state of our souls in His sight, this is one of the most important; one of the tests by which we can most truly find out whether we are going on in the broad or the narrow way. If we do not habitually raise our hearts to our FATHER in Heaven, that kind compassionate GOD, who (and it is a great truth) is ever listening, bowing down his ear, to hear the sighs of the contrite spirit; if we do not habitually approach HIM in the name of His adorable SON, and ask HIM for help and comfort, lay before HIM all our distresses, and implore His Blessed SPIRIT to remain with us, all unworthy as we are, and not to leave us to ourselves in the midst of this wicked world, this life of dangerous trial; if, I say, we are not living in this frame of heart and mind, we surely are living in the neglect of prayer; and then, whatever we may think of ourselves, surely, in all reason and

religion, our condition must be one of extreme danger. This might easily be shown from numberless considerations. But I shall only now mention this one; if we are not constant, earnest, and importunate in our addresses and supplications to our FATHER in Heaven, we certainly do not love HIM, we do not look to HIM as we sinners are authorized and invited to do in His glorious Gospel, we do not, I say, look to HIM as our FATHER.

And if we cannot, or rather I should say, if we will not look to HIM as our FATHER, what other hope or dependence can we be trusting to? Our having a good character in the world for morality, or for religion, will avail us nothing; our thinking favourably of ourselves will avail us nothing; our occasional regard to good forms, or occasional indulgence of seeming religious feelings will avail us nothing. If we do not love and adore, and devote ourselves to the LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity, we are surely not in the safe way to salvation, and without leading a life of prayer, how can we flatter ourselves that we love our GOD?

Strive then, more and more, to have your hearts fixed where only solid and lasting comfort is to be had. In all possible ways, learn and practise, or rather I should say, learn by practice, the love of GOD. Think of HIM as the greatest and best of friends, ever near, ever listening after our wants, especially after our sighs of sorrow for the past, our petitions for aid for the time to come, ever remembering "that HE is far more ready to hear than we to pray;" that in His boundless love and compassion to penitent sinners, to those for whom HE gave up the SON of His love; in this, I say, His boundless love and anxiety for us, HE will never reject the prayer of the humble, but will indeed forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and give us those good things which we are not worthy to ask; His mercy and pardon now, His store of bliss and glory unspeakable, in His own immediate presence, through eternity.

SERMON CCCXXXVI.

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS TO BE LOVED.

(FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.)

PSALM cxix. 47.

“ I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved.”

IN the Collect for this week, we are instructed to beseech our Heavenly FATHER, through His Son JESUS CHRIST, that HE would make us to love what HE commands, and so obtain what HE promises. By joining in this public prayer, we make, at the same time, a public profession of our belief, that unless we *do* love God's commandments, we cannot expect to obtain His promises. It also seems, that in this practical love of GOD through life, leading to the enjoyment of His blessed presence hereafter, we are to look for the proper fruits of all true Christian virtues or graces, for “ the increase of faith, hope, and charity.”

For “ increase” means fruits or effects ; and as faith is vain unless it produce hope, and hope is vain unless it produce love, so love or charity itself is but a name, if it has not its proper effect on our practice ; in other words, if, while we seek to obtain what God promises, we do not also love what HE commands.

This indeed is plain enough when stated in words ; nevertheless, it is a truth of which the best and wisest of us needs continually to be put in mind.

For this reason I entreat your attention to a few considerations, which seem of great importance on this subject, namely, on the

necessity of our "loving what God commands," (as the Collect says;) or in the words of the inspired Prophet in the text—of "delighting ourselves in God's commandments, which we must love."

Now these are strong expressions, and, compared with others of the same tendency in Holy Scripture, they seem to warn us against an error in which perhaps we too easily allow ourselves, the error, I mean, of satisfying ourselves with our supposed obedience to what God commands, without any great endeavour to delight in or love our duty.

The love of God's laws is certainly to be distinguished from the mere outward observance of them.

As in the law of Moses, so far more in the Gospel of CHRIST, religion is "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter,"—consisting not in the mere observance of certain rules, however good, but in the love and delight we have in observing them, as being the gracious means appointed by our Heavenly FATHER and REDEEMER to bring us to His eternal rest.

All the holy precepts and warnings, with which the Gospel is filled, the true Christian not merely outwardly regards with respect, but receives with sincere gratitude and delight. He knows that they are the warnings of his best and only Friend; the precepts of that SAVIOUR who, for his sake, yielded up HIMSELF to death, even the death of the cross.

How necessary it is that we seriously lay to heart the distinction I have mentioned, between merely paying some observance to the Divine commandments, and really "loving and delighting ourselves in them;" how necessary it is for us all seriously to attend to this distinction, may appear to any considerate person who remembers both the reason of the thing, and also what the sacred voice of Scripture has determined upon the subject.

As to the reason of the thing, it is plain that in proportion as we have a regard for any person, we always take pleasure in doing what will please him; and that, if we are indifferent and careless about this, it is the strongest of all proofs that our regard for that person is little or none.

In the same manner it is plain that there is no proof so decisive

of our love or neglect of ALMIGHTY GOD, as whether we love or neglect His commandments. *His* commandments, I say, considered not merely as highly reasonable in *themselves*, and very useful and advantageous to *us*, but as given us by HIM to whom we owe every thing, creation, redemption, sanctification.

The sacred voice of Scripture also solemnly confirms this most reasonable opinion. The Blessed JESUS HIMSELF urges it on His disciples repeatedly, and with wonderful earnestness. For instance, "If ye love Me, keep *My* commandments." "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." "If a man love Me, he will keep My word." And the same kind of warning is to be found in the writings of the Apostles, particularly in the Epistles of St. John.

And what we particularly observe in it is, that, as Christians, we are called to put in practice, not some vague, undetermined, fanciful notions of goodness or virtue, but the plain will and pleasure of our best, I ought to say, our only Friend.

The Christian then who loves CHRIST JESUS, must of necessity also love His commandments. I say, not merely pay some outward regard, but sincerely take pleasure and delight in them, *because* they are the commands of CHRIST JESUS.

This being certainly true, and what no seriously disposed person will think of denying or questioning, it seems no less than necessary for us all, to the best of our ability, to look into and examine our own conduct in this respect. I mean, to see whether or not we really, as we ought, love what our God commands, and, as the Prophet says, "delight ourselves in it." For in this respect, as in others, no doubt we may deceive ourselves with false confidence.

Looking then impartially into our course of life and conduct, we ought to observe whether or not it is a sincere delight and consolation to us to meditate on what our Heavenly FATHER and REDEEMER has done for us, and to hold communion with HIM in prayer, thanksgiving, and continual aspirations after His eternal rest.

I say, we should consider whether or not these sacred employments, the high privileges of a Christian, have been neglected by us in any degree; or, if attended to, whether it was for form's sake, just to keep ourselves easy; or for outward appearance sake,

to keep up a religious character with others; or for both these together. Because, if so, we certainly are deceiving ourselves with false hopes.

In the same manner we should examine ourselves as to our conduct towards each other, whether *that* is founded upon the high Christian principle of love for, and delight in, our REDEEMER'S will, or upon some other mean unworthy grounds.

For instance, when we are called on to do acts of mercy and compassion, of kindness and good-will towards others,—as we are of course every day and hour—do we consider it a privilege, a real pleasure and satisfaction, to be able thus to show our love and gratitude to our GOD; or do we consider it as a painful duty, what ought indeed to be regarded, but what, nevertheless, we would avoid if we could?

And so when we are treated with unkindness, ingratitude, or contempt, have we learned the Christian lesson, to receive such treatment with sincere humility, nay more, with sincere joy and inward satisfaction, at having such opportunities offered us of testifying our love to HIM who endured such infinite, unspeakable sufferings for us?

If not, surely we have yet to learn the true lessons of the Gospel¹.

In the same way, if we seriously wish to follow "the way which leadeth unto life," we are bound to examine ourselves as to our self-command and power over our temper and disposition.

This, indeed, like all other Christian graces, is owing to the gracious aid of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, yet we are commanded to "watch, stand fast, and be strong," or else surely not to expect to be successful.

We must observe then whether we derive real inward satisfaction from the exercise of patience, mortification, and self-denial; whether we can thank GOD for troubles and disappointments, and feel daily more and more convinced that this world being not a place of rest, but of trial and discipline, we never,

¹ See *The Spiritual Combat*.

under any circumstances, can presume to say that more is laid upon us than we can bear. This is the sort of temper so eloquently set forth by the great Apostle as the true temper of the Christian: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom the world is a crucified thing to me, and I unto the world."

Thus did St. Paul delight himself in the cross of his REDEEMER, which he loved, and in that was a pattern to all Christians.

If now, on a fair and candid enquiry, we really find, that in respect of our duty to GOD and our neighbour, and of the command we should have over ourselves, we have loved and delighted in the Divine will, even where it was quite contrary to our own, then, indeed, we have reason to be happy—then, indeed, we have reason to hope that, through the blood of the REDEEMER, and the assistance of the COMFORTER, we "have chosen the way of truth,"—the way that leads to eternal life.

Yet still there is the utmost necessity that, at the very best, we should bear in mind the solemn caution of the Apostle, "Be not high-minded," be not too confident of your growth in spiritual grace, of your willingness to endure any thing for your REDEEMER'S sake; "Be not high-minded, but fear."

If, on the other hand, we find, upon inquiry, that we have gone on the path of our duty reluctantly and unwillingly,—that we have not delighted ourselves in the commandments of our GOD, nor loved them as in reason we ought,—that whilst our duty has been one way, our pleasure has been another,—why then let us consider seriously, let us endeavour to feel, before it is too late, that our condition is—not indeed hopeless, but yet one of real danger and alarm.

The reason is, as we have before considered, because not to take pleasure in GOD'S commandments, even when they are quite opposite to our own natural will, is too plain a proof that we are wanting in charity, wanting in love to HIM, on whom all our dependence is. And without this Divine charity, we know, on the highest of all authorities, that we are nothing.

Suppose then we are called on in the way of our daily duty to do or to suffer things which are naturally vexatious, irksome, and unpleasant to us. In proportion as we love our GOD and SAVIOUR, we shall delight even in such trials, simply for this reason, because they are sent on us by HIM.

My Christian brethren, let us learn before it is too late, before our time of trial is past, to see the matter in this light, which is certainly true and reasonable. Let us not trust to the strength of our faith, or the warmth of our hope; not to the extent of our knowledge, or the security of a supposed inward peace. Let our delight be with the holy psalmist's, in the commandments of our GOD, in the practice of all that is good and holy, all the will of the blessed and adorable JESUS.

And wherein, let me ask, is this holy practice, this obedience to the Divine will, most to be proved and discerned? Not, let us be assured, in great sorrows and sufferings, not in extraordinary losses and calamities,—not in *them* chiefly or only,—but in the little daily, hourly trials and mortifications which befall us, and which we must expect to meet with more and more in proportion as we make up our minds to renounce this world, and to live only to God and eternity.

We must, I say, expect to meet with such trials more and more, but then they will grow less and less painful in proportion as our hearts are weaned from the love of things temporal, and fixed more intensely on things eternal. Certain it is, that the more we can cherish a reasonable and well-grounded hope of obtaining what our GOD has promised, the more disposed also we shall be to love what HE commands. In proportion as we draw nearer to the heavenly Canaan, the useless labours, the uncertain enjoyments of this present wilderness will appear more and more as, what they really are, in themselves of no lasting importance, altogether unworthy the attention of immortal spirits, placed here for a little time of trial, then to pass to an eternal state.

Nothing then remains but that we lay these things seriously to heart, and endeavour day after day to regulate our practice accordingly.

That we consider that the case really is so with us, one and all, that we cannot reasonably expect to obtain what our GOD

promises, unless we make it our earnest desire to love whatever HE commands.

That to this purpose we use ourselves daily and habitually to raise our hearts above this present restless scene to those blessed regions where all is joy, tranquillity, and peace.

That we still bear on our hearts a deep and practical sense of the vast, the infinite love of our only REDEEMER, ADVOCATE, and INTERCESSOR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, through whom alone we can look for the promised eternal rest.

That we still remember also the love for us, no less vast and infinite, of the HOLY GHOST the COMFORTER, by whose guidance and support alone we can be enabled to delight in what is commanded us, be it ever so difficult, ever so painful.

Thus must we seek support to our weakness, and consolation to our sorrows, from that source where alone support and consolation are to be found, and whence they will never be sought in vain. And thus making it our business through life to love and delight in the commands of our REDEEMER, we shall not fail at last, through the atonement of His blood, to be admitted to obtain His heavenly promises, His kingdom of eternal glory.

SERMON CCCXXXVII.

QUIET, HUMBLE DILIGENCE¹.

1 THESS. iv. 11—13.

“ That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you ; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

IN whatever point of view we consider the holy religion which we profess, we shall always be led to this conclusion—that it requires us to give up ourselves wholly and unreservedly to its rules.

I say, we shall come to this conclusion, if we consider it with sufficient seriousness and attention, and do not satisfy ourselves with such slight and superficial notions as serve only to lull the conscience to sleep from time to time, but are no solid foundation on which a reasonable man could build his hopes for Eternity.

It is very evident, from the general nature of the Gospel, as well as from a great many express passages in different parts of Scripture, that true devotion means nothing less than this—a life devoted to God, consecrated and given up to His service.

So far as we lead this sort of life, we are truly devout ; and, in whatever degree we forget God and His sacred will, in that degree

¹ Reached in a country church, the Sunday after the funeral of an aged poor widow.

our souls are in danger, however we may flatter ourselves that all is safe and well with them.

Very often people think themselves religious if they keep what is called the Sabbath with strictness, and go to a 'place of worship,' and feel comfort in hymns and sermons, and have inward feelings of pardon and peace; and, in a certain sense, they *are* religious. But surely, none of these separately, nor all together, are to be trusted to as evidences of our being sincerely devout; for, as we must be warned again and again, the best forms may be occasionally observed, the best feelings occasionally cherished, and yet all the while practices allowed, and dispositions kept up, very unsuitable to the Gospel of God.

Especially, as I have before, and must again, take occasion to remind you, are we all in danger of being misled by the spirit of pride and indolence in some form or other; in danger of being so misled by it, as in fact, eventually, to "fail of the grace of God," and to be disowned by HIM in His great day of terror.

This accounts for the powerful, energetic language which the sacred writers used, under the direction of the HOLY SPIRIT, in warning all "who should name the Name of CHRIST," to depart from these kinds of iniquity especially; from pride and self-confidence, and also from indolence and all self-indulgent tempers.

As, for instance, how strong, how energetic and vehement, is this language of the zealous St. Peter—"Yea, all of you (you Christians) be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility"—(the word translated "clothed," in the original, is very expressive, "be girded," tightly fastened, as it were, never to put off, or part with, your humility); adding the great sanctions—"For GOD resisteth the proud, (resisteth, sets HIMSELF against the proud,) but giveth grace to the humble." And so with regard to the other evil tendency, namely, that to indolence and want of energy, the Divine warnings are very express, and in various forms repeated—"The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh." "He that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster." "A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again." "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets." "I must work the works of HIM that sent ME while it is day" (said HE who came to leave us an example);

“the night cometh when no man can work.” “Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us” (said His illustrious Apostle); “we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought. And when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” “We beseech you, therefore, that ye abound more and more” in all Christian graces, “and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without,” that is, (as he was writing to Christians living in a heathen town,) that ye may do nothing to bring disgrace on your Christian profession, “and that ye may have lack of nothing,” or (margin) “of no man,” that ye may not be obliged to depend on wicked heathen people for support.

As pride, then, and indolence are the two great evil principles, or dispositions, which hinder and entangle us in this our path of trial, we see at once that a humble diligent course of life is that which is most sure of the Divine blessing; that which (so to say), above all other, the KING OF GLORY delighteth to honour. Only we must be careful not to separate these two heavenly graces; for, if separate, they are no longer heavenly and real, but false, and of earthly, if not lower, origin. A diligent person may be vain and proud, or covetous and unfeeling; but, then, to what end does his diligence tend? A humble person, or at least appearing humble, may be slothful and negligent; but, surely, his humility is not really such, but mere indolence and want of energy. And, indeed, as a general rule, we may observe, that the graces of the Gospel are so united, that the want of any one may, perhaps, give us great reason to fear that we are deficient in all, according to St. James’s rule.

But be this as it may, it is most certainly the diligent, humble course of life which the great Apostle meant to urge on the primitive Christians, in this passage of his Epistle to the Thessalonians; and if on the primitive Christians, then, of course, on Christians in every age, and on ourselves. I say, a course of life, not diligent only, nor humble only, but diligent *and* humble.

And it seems remarkable how, immediately after having given this kind of instruction, he proceeds at once to what might at first seem altogether a different topic—“But I would not have

you to be ignorant, concerning them which are asleep,"—ignorant, that is, of the truth, and your duty with regard to them—"that ye sorrow not, even as others,"—the unconverted, unbaptized heathen—"which have no hope. For if we believe that JESUS died and rose again;" if we are in earnest when we say the Creed every day, so surely must we believe and confess that "them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with HIM."

I say, it is remarkable how immediately this passage follows on the other; because we are so plainly taught, that if we would wish to die the death of the righteous Christian, or, in St. Paul's words, to "sleep in JESUS," we must labour to lead a life suitable; and what kind of life that is, the same Apostle distinctly describes—"We beseech you, Christian brethren, that ye increase more and more,"—still endeavour, from day to day, to grow in grace, and in the practical knowledge of the LORD JESUS CHRIST—"and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you."

But now, perhaps, some persons may be inclined to think that this is but a small matter, to lead a quiet, humble, hard-working life; that it may be very well and right, so far as it goes, but that it has little or nothing of true evangelical religion in it. And yet, you see, St. Paul expressly implies that those who lead this kind of life, will, when they die, "sleep in JESUS," and that their condition will be such as to give no cause for overmuch sorrow, as for those for whom there is no hope.

Let this, then, be a little considered on the present occasion, and this the rather, because the recollection of one, whose mortal remains were yesterday deposited in the holy ground of this church-yard, may suggest to many of us, in the way of example, warnings quite in harmony with the inspired admonitions of St. Paul, both in respect of a Christian's duty, and a Christian's hope.

The Apostle says, that, as Christians, we ought even to "study to be quiet." The word translated "study," is, in the original, very expressive. In it is implied, that we take *great pains* to lead a quiet, peaceable life; that we make it the object of our *ambition*; that as many people will do or suffer any thing almost to get money, or station, or worldly success, so the true Christian should

be of the same temper, but for quite a different purpose and end, namely, "to be quiet."

However, lest this quietness should be debased into idleness or cowardliness, and people should shrink from their duty, under pretence of keeping quiet, the holy Apostle, after his manner, immediately adds—"and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;" implying, that as the Christian must always be quiet and peaceful, so he must never be careless and idle, but ever be full of energy and spirit in the quiet accomplishment of his every day duties, in that state of life to which it may have pleased God to call him. And, I suppose I may venture to say, without any undue commendation of the departed, that our deceased sister was ever remarkable for these quiet, meek, unobtrusive ways.

And so, too, with regard to that other positive quality, or rather grace, urged on us by the Apostle,—steady, uniform diligence about our proper business and calling,—we may venture also to say, without any unbecoming flattery, that our departed sister has set us an example, through a long and difficult course of trials; an example which we all should do well to follow, be our station what it may.

Hers was, I say, a long and difficult course of trials; for, in addition to the usual perplexities which beset the mother of a large family, she had to perform the part of both parents—father and mother; and with what patience, diligence, and quiet resolution she accomplished these duties, those who knew her best are best able to say.

Yet, with all this, and up to the last, there was in her the sincerest humility and self-distrust, great fears and anxiety lest she should fall short of the prize of her high calling, her only hope placed in the mercies of her SAVIOUR, and in His merits who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners. In short, in our departed sister seems to have been realized, after the manner of men, and in that imperfect degree which, alas! must be looked for in the present decayed state of religion in the world—I say, there seems in her to have been realized that parable, or prophecy, or warning (whichever it may be called), of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, when HE said, "When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh,

he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

However, as the old heathen rule was, "Never speak ill of the dead," so Christian people ought to be cautious how they speak of them at all. For, for any thing we know, our departed friends are aware of what we say of them; and those whom we would not have ventured to flatter when visibly amongst us, we ought to be very cautious of over-praising after they have been removed from this scene of trial.

What we ought to do, is to endeavour, as much as possible, to imitate the good examples which have been set us by all those who have gone before us—all who have departed this life in GOD'S faith and fear. In whatever they said or did which was good and right, we should pray and strive to be like them; in whatever respects their faults or failings appeared, we should take special warning. I say special warning, because the faults and negligences of God's faithful servants are so apt to be taken hold of by ill-disposed persons—and even by us all too often—as some excuse or palliation for our own greater sins; and people say, If such an one did so and so, surely I may be excused. Against such a disposition as this we have very great need to be on our guard. Because, by indulging it, we not only lose the benefit which might otherwise be derived from good examples, but also, as the prophet Nathan expressed it in a well-known melancholy case, we "give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," and worldly irreligious persons are but too glad to find a blot in the character of the faithful Christian.

But we need not dwell on this thought any longer. Rather let us bethink ourselves how we may best fulfil the advice of the holy Apostle to lead a quiet, humble, diligent life, as being the true way to adorn the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR, and that so, when we depart out of this life, we may sleep in HIM,—as St. Paul intimates in the passage now considered.

That Christian people should "study to be quiet," or, as the Apostle expresses it in another place, "to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty," we cannot at all doubt.

But the difficulty is great, at least in many instances, especially if we try to do our duty; I say, if we try to do our duty—because very often we are disposed to stand off from our plain duty, for fear of bringing trouble and disquietness on ourselves or others. But this is not the quietness which St. Paul advised us to seek after; this is not the sort of rest or refreshment which our LORD JESUS CHRIST offers to those who are weary and heavy-laden.

This implies the quietness and rest of a good conscience, in other words it implies that a person should still, from day to day, labour by all means in his power, as the Church teaches us in the Catechism,—and who will dare to say that it is not good teaching, and what it would be well for us all to attend to more than we do?—I mean the advice to “do our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased GOD to call us.”

To study to be quiet, then, means not at all that we may be indolent, slovenly, or heartless, or unwilling to exert ourselves, but only that we should keep far off from all meddling, gossiping ways; from being what St. Paul calls “busybodies in other men’s matters,” from quarrelling and backbiting, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, also from troubling ourselves much about politics and worldly matters, which are of little or no concern to us private Christians.

The Apostle implies that it is “study” enough for us to keep these things out of our thoughts, and to keep quietly on, each with our own business, and especially that we “work with our own hands” in some way or other,—a form of expression which is frequently found in St. Paul’s writings, and which implies real downright useful employment in some way or other—not merely talking of work, but doing it. And all this, as he intimates, must be done under a deep sense of our Christian responsibility, that is, as baptized Christians, partakers of GOD’S heavenly gift in baptism, having great privileges in possession, and great promises in prospect, and, as he says in another place, “servants of the LORD CHRIST.”

If we so pass the time of our sojourning here, in the stedfast fear and love of HIM who loved us and gave HIMSELF for us, then we may have reasonable hope that when we depart out of this life, we shall sleep in the LORD, and at the general resurrection shall receive that blessing which the SON of GOD shall

then pronounce to all that love and fear HIM. But if we do not endeavour to lead this kind of life, then whatever our confidences or professions may be, we may have real reason to fear lest, when *we* come to die, those whom we leave behind us may have ground for sorrow, even as those which have no hope. But God forbid that this should be our condition: still as the world now is, so far from what the Gospel of CHRIST would have it to be, there must, of course, always be great cause for fear and anxiety, even for those who are best disposed.

For "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Such is the solemn question of the inspired Apostle, and who can answer it? And should it not fill us all with serious thoughts lest, while we pass things over so smoothly, and have such confident assurances about the spiritual condition of ourselves or our friends,—lest, I say, the omniscient GOD should form a different judgment from what we so easily venture on, with self-flattering partiality.

So that, after all, in whatever way we view the matter, whether with regard to ourselves or our neighbours, with regard to the living or the dead, the fearful or the hopeful, still it will bring us to the same conclusion, that a quiet, meek, humble, diligent, holy course of practice is the only one that can be safe for us all. For in this there is no difference—be we young or old, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, sick or well—as we shall be all laid low in the same dust at last, so the same tempers and dispositions are equally suitable and even necessary for us all now. Our duties lie indeed in different ways, but our tempers and dispositions should be all alike. No person can be so circumstanced as that he need not study to be quiet and patient, and earnestly bent on doing and suffering whatever his heavenly LORD and MASTER shall direct.

For we must always remember, that this world is not ever meant to be to the Christian a place of comfort, ease, and inaction in any sense. We must rest indeed, but then it is only from sin we must rest, not from doing our duty, or suffering according to GOD'S will. One or other of these two, holy doing or holy suffering, the true Christian will always be engaged in. And thus to an active mind we see what a trial it is when ill-health comes on, or the feebleness of increasing years;—I say,

what a trial it is to such to be forced to leave off their active habits, and to lie, perhaps for weeks, months, and even years, on a sick bed, apparently useless, helpless, and forgotten by the world. Forgotten by the world, but not forgotten by HIM whom they have faithfully, however imperfectly, served in their former days of health and strength, and whom now by degrees they learn to be thankful to for thus disciplining them, and weaning their affections from things earthly, and making them know and feel that all worldly things, however alluring for the time, are but vanity, and very often vexation of spirit also; and that nothing can give such solid substantial comfort as the recollection of a life spent in the love of God, and in the faith of JESUS CHRIST; a life of lowliness, penitence, and obedience.

These are matters for us to call to mind at all times, and especially when ALMIGHTY GOD, in any of His dispensations, calls our thoughts to them, as I suppose we may say HE continually does when HE takes away our friends and neighbours from us.

We perhaps pass sentence on them for good or evil, as it may happen; but *our* sentence is of small value. The important thing is, so to live that both our friends departed, and we who remain, may be counted in the Great Day "worthy"² members of CHRIST'S spiritual body. This is our only matter of importance. This is the one thing needful. And to attain this great and difficult end, (for the Bible itself has pronounced it difficult,) surely we all need devote our active diligence, our care and anxiety for the uncertain period that we shall have each of us yet to remain in this place.

² St. Luke xx. 35.

SERMON CCCXXXVIII.

NECESSITY OF OUR RETURNING TO GOD.

MALACHI iii. 7.

“Return unto ME, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?”

WHENEVER, in any respect, we have wandered away from the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life, our FATHER in Heaven does not at once leave us to ourselves, but in His tender love and forbearance has recourse to various means whereby to bring us back to HIMSELF.

This is plainly the case with individual Christians; indeed, perhaps it is the condition of mankind universally. For it was the observation of a heathen poet and philosopher, “that no person becomes very wicked all at once.” In other words, “the work of God’s Law written in men’s hearts” (as the Apostle says), the voice of “conscience bearing witness” for or against, “accusing or excusing,”—this inward monitor speaks the language of ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF, and bids us look to ourselves before it be too late.

Now it seems to be the same with churches and nations as with individuals, in this respect as in others, that our merciful FATHER offers checks and warnings when HE sees any generally prevailing tendency to depart from HIM.

If a nation grows rich and proud, full of all manner of adventurous speculations, so that, like the people after the flood,

“nothing can be restrained from them that they have imagined to do,” then it is a great mercy if ALMIGHTY GOD condescends to check such a nation as it were in its wild career of speculation, and to bring men to more sober and humble thoughts of themselves. And in like manner, if, in any Christian Church, people have become self-confident, neglectful of ancient rules, scorning attention to plain moral duties, yet all the while exulting in unreal feelings and fancies, as tokens of the Divine favour,—when such symptoms of corruption show themselves, it is a great mercy if our good GOD, by any chastisements, warns us of our danger, and of the necessity of returning to HIM whilst yet we may. These are plain truths, which I suppose no one will deny or question.

But it is also to be considered, whether what the prophet Malachi represents as the conduct of GOD’S people in his time, does not also too exactly describe that of Christians—of ourselves. The message of JEHOVAH to His chosen people, when they had wandered away from HIM, wilfully neglected His precepts, ungratefully requited HIM for all His mercies,—still His message was one of the tenderest affectionate compassion,—“Return unto ME, and I will return unto you.” It was of course to be expected that they would gladly embrace so gracious an offer; that their only inquiry would be in what way they could best prove the sincerity of their repentance.

But according to the brief and indignant description of the prophet, that is, of the HOLY SPIRIT speaking by him, no such temper showed itself. Quite otherwise. They had done nothing to be ashamed of. You tell us to “return;” “Wherein shall we return?” Why may we not go on as we are—what need of repentance or amendment?

GOD’S people thus answered HIM formerly, and in this unfeeling manner received His paternal chastisements. We, as baptized Christians, are GOD’S people now, and His chastising hand is laid upon us in various ways—as a nation and as a Church on us all—and individually many persons have of course besides, their own private and peculiar trials. Thus then we are all variously tried, and in various ways GOD speaks to us as to His people of

old, and says, "Return unto ME, and I will return unto you." And our inquiry ought to be, not in scorn and self-righteousness, but in all the sincerity of a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, "Wherein shall we return?"

Our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, we well know, pressed most earnestly on all who would follow HIM the necessity of self-denial, that is, of doing and suffering what is painful and unpleasant to us, out of love to HIM. This is expressed in the words, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Now this we promised to do when in baptism we were admitted to the privileges of the Christian covenant. And if, alas! we have not led the rest of our lives according to that beginning, but have, as we must confess, "followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts," then, now, before it is too late, the voice of God speaks to us, "Return unto ME, and I will return unto you."

"Return unto ME" in all self-abasement and self-denial, "and I will return to you" in those special gifts and graces which eminently mark the presence of God's good SPIRIT. Thus, for instance, if we happen to be in what are called easy circumstances, able to have tolerable comforts and advantages—I mean in respect of food and clothing—and if, perhaps, we have never reflected that, as followers of JESUS CHRIST, we are required to exercise self-denial in these very respects—now we are warned to return unto the LORD by the positive real practice of self-denial, to deny ourselves what we should like, what we can afford, what we have been used to, and thus to prove our willingness at least to take up the Cross after JESUS CHRIST. But if we happen to be, as so many are, in a condition of life, where, not without difficulty, even food and raiment is obtained for a family, then, if we bear the trial with courage and patience, and receive it as a Divine chastisement, and not as a matter of worldly chance, then we do "what is acceptable to the LORD," and so far, at least, we return to HIM in such a way as HE approves and will bless.

And whatever our condition in life may be, self-denial in matters of disposition and temper is so essential to the Christian character, that if we have neglected it, we have indeed urgent

need to return to the LORD in this respect without delay. For it is no small matter for a Christian person to be angry and passionate, spiteful and unkind, envious, covetous, or hard-hearted.

It is a sign of a heart estranged from CHRIST when there is cherished a temper of pride, of stubbornness, of disobedience to the voice of authority, especially to the voice of the Church, —in short, any tendency to self-will is an evidence that the “heart is not right in the sight of God.”

In these respects then, conscience, if fairly asked and listened to, will tell us whether we have need to return to the LORD. Only we must be careful that we examine ourselves with sincerity, and as in His presence, before whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid.

Again, in regard of the great duty, or privilege, of prayer, it is of the most serious importance that we ascertain for ourselves whether we have at all wandered away from the LORD, and so need to return to HIM in true substantial amendment. As prayer brings down the Divine blessings, so the neglect of prayer causes those blessings to be withholden.

It is then for thoughtful persons to consider whether the neglect of prayer may not be one great cause why the afflicting hand of GOD is laid upon us; and especially when the Church has so plainly appointed daily morning and evening prayers to be offered up in every house of GOD in the land, whether Christian ministers and Christian people can answer for the neglect of what is so plainly appointed by authority, and in itself so good, so reasonable, so holy.

This is a matter for thoughtful persons to consider, and so also is this fact, that so many persons neglect prayer, and teach others to neglect it, under pretence that prayer is useless unless the feelings be affected. In this way infidelity creeps unawares into the heart, and before almost they are aware, Christian people are drawn far away from their GOD, and this even with a pretence of a more spiritual service of HIM.

If such be at all our case, greatly does it concern us to return to HIM whilst yet HE will return to us—to pray daily and earnestly, and on our knees, if possible in GOD’s own house, but certainly at home—to pray that we may be able to pray, and willing

to pray, and that we may never any more be negligent of so solemn a duty, so inestimable a privilege.

In prayer, especially, the Divine word of promise may be supposed to hold good to Christian people—"Return unto ME, and I will return unto you." If we, with penitent hearts, and in the prevailing Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, earnestly seek GOD'S aid, those that so come to HIM (as sure as the Gospel is true) HE will in no wise cast out.

Let no person stand back from the practice of prayer, because he has too long neglected it, or because he is perhaps advanced in years, and his feelings are deadened, or because his thoughts have been so occupied in worldly business that he cannot fix them on things spiritual; be not deceived by any such specious arguments as these, which Satan puts into your mind, but break through all opposition; kneel resolutely down on your knees, and say from your heart any such prayers as you know, and, above all, the LORD'S Prayer. Do this again and again, (I would give this advice to persons who have too much neglected prayer,) and, by degrees, you will find the comfort and blessing of such a practice; and then, as you "have returned unto the LORD," so "HE will return to you."

But, especially, let seriously-minded Christians consider, how such an affliction as is now laid on us, figuratively as it were, makes us feel the value of spiritual food. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," said our Blessed LORD to the hard-hearted Jews, "but for that which endureth unto everlasting life,"—even His own Flesh and His own Blood, as HE afterwards explained it, and as the Church has ever since understood and received the great doctrine down to this day.

If men, Christians, have departed from their LORD, and turned their backs (as it were) upon HIM, saying, as the Jews did in Malachi's time, "The table of the LORD is contemptible," then, now we are warned by the destitution of bodily food, of the infinite value of what alone can nourish both body and soul to everlasting life, even that "Body and Blood of CHRIST, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD'S Supper."

Will any person say, that it is of no consequence whether or not he is a partaker in this most Holy Feast? Will any person

say, that it is safe to live and die without this Heavenly Food? or, will any person venture to offer himself to receive it in careless or unholy levity? We may do so, but surely, in either case, we leave ourselves without excuse. Nor is there any safe alternative, but only to return to our LORD GOD, in deep penitence and real obedience; then, and then only, can we expect His blessing.

Or, to take another instance of Christian privilege, or duty, whichever it is considered, I mean that of showing kindness to those who need it. If, in this respect, conscience tells us we have been neglectful, now we are plainly warned to return to our God herein, and we need not fear but HE will return to us. Almsgiving and fasting are kindred graces; to deny ourselves is a great step towards rendering assistance to others. And that this grace does not at all depend on people's worldly condition, but is as much in the power of the poorest as of the richest, we may perceive from two considerations; one, a worldly observation (so to say); the other of a religious kind.

We know that our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF said, that the poor widow who cast in two mites to the offerings of God, cast more in than all the rich persons. We also know, or may know if we observe, that it is not those who are most able who are generally the most willing to go to trouble and expense in behalf of their poorer brethren. So that Scripture and experience both concur in teaching us, that this grace of Christian bountifulness is in every one's power.

But if it be in every one's power, then no one will be excused from it—every one will be called to account for it in the last day. And if, owing to a defective education, or to long habit, or to regard to the example of others, or, worst of all, to miserable selfish covetousness, we have gone on for a long while in the neglect of this most Christian grace, then now this is God's warning to us, at this time when so many are suffering in various ways, to return unto HIM in true and self-denying love—"For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

These, then, are matters for humble minds to reflect on, and if

the heart be indeed humble, the conduct will be proportionably affected. That is to say, if, in any of the respects now mentioned, or in any other which conscience suggests, we find that we have wandered away from the only safe path, then if we take God's warnings rightly, we shall return to HIM without delay, earnestly hoping and praying that it may not be too late, but that, in His infinite mercy, HE will return to us. Yea, though we may be a great way off from HIM, yet, if we do but move towards HIM in unfeigned penitence, we are encouraged by His own gracious words to believe that HE will hasten to meet us, and to welcome us, as it were, back to our home.

But, then, there must be a real, hearty obedience, otherwise a return is no return. It is not a matter of profession, or of feeling, or of knowledge, but of absolute practice; of humble temper, and humble practice.

This is plain to common sense, plain to all candid hearers or readers of sacred Scripture. And it is wonderful, how people can pretend to set forth religion in any view inconsistent with this. Though it is so explained, too often, to the damage and danger of many Christian souls.

One more caution I would suggest, as naturally following from what has been said, and that is, to beware of the miserable notion that all is well enough with us, and that we have no need to try to improve.

I call this a miserable notion, because it checks and blights (as it were) all endeavours after that growth in grace, that progress towards perfection, which, in various forms of expression, is so frequently and so solemnly pressed on our consciences by the sacred writers, and, above all, by our Blessed LORD HIMSELF. Now, when once, from whatever cause, we stand still, and imagine either that we are good enough, or, at least, safe enough; or else, that we have gone on so long in the service of the world, that it is now too late for us to be what Christians ought to be; whenever the heart is, as it were, benumbed and paralysed by either of these delusions, the case is indeed one of danger.

But yet it is a very common case, very common indeed, as all persons must confess who observe how people are disposed to live, and content to die. Be it our care, then, my brethren, still

from day to day, to be returning to the LORD, still searching out our faults and failings, and still endeavouring to amend them. If we so return to HIM, HE will surely return to us. Then His chastisements will turn into mercies to us, and we shall acknowledge a FATHER'S hand in every trial. Then the world, with its vanities, will no longer be of such importance in our eyes as it has been, and we shall see and feel that nothing is of any real consequence but the favour of ALMIGHTY GOD, and that there is no way to secure that favour but by obedience to the will of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And, in this conviction, we shall obtain that solid peace and comfort which this world can neither give nor take away.

SERMON CCCXXXIX.

THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH.

ZECH. viii. 19.

“Therefore love the truth and peace.”

THOSE who have at all carefully inquired into the sacred history of the Old Testament, are aware, that the three last of the Prophets, namely, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, are, in many respects, remarkably different from the rest.

They were the only Prophets who lived after the Captivity; and, like a glorious setting sun, their language and instruction is, as has been said of the second Temple, which they so much speak of, “covered with the Gospel.”

Of these, the Prophet Zechariah lived rather more than five hundred years before the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. He prophesied, as I said, to the Jews *after* their return from their seventy years' captivity, and encouraged them with assurances, that, on their sincere repentance, they should again be accepted into favour with JEHOVAH, the GOD of their fathers. He signified also, by figures, and in terms which could not be mistaken¹, the approach of the MESSIAH—“the Branch,”—and exhorted all men to prepare for His coming, not by a worship of forms and ceremonies, but by a sincere practical love of GOD and of each other. “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother :

¹ See Chap. vi.

and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor ; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart²." And again—"These are the things that ye shall *do* ; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour ; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates : and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour ; and love no false oath : for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD³."

The Prophet then goes on to encourage them with the assurance, that if they would thus turn to their GOD, with their hearts, and in their lives, HE would certainly accept them, that their fasts should be turned into festivals—"to the house of Judah joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts;" and then comes his practical conclusion, brief indeed, but most energetic—"therefore *love the truth and peace.*"

It is, too, worth observing, that this solemn admonition may seem to derive additional weight from the consideration, that it is almost the concluding message which the Prophet Zechariah delivered to his countrymen. For it is a well-known opinion of learned men, and of those who are best able to judge, that in this book, which goes by the name of Zechariah, only the first eight chapters were written by him ; the six last chapters are supposed to have been written at an earlier period, by some other Prophet, probably Jeremiah. In illustration of which, there is this fact much to be observed, namely, that in the account given in the 27th chapter of St. Matthew, of our Blessed LORD's sufferings, the Evangelist, speaking of the money which the priests gave to Judas Iscariot, as a bribe to betray his Master, says that the traitor, full of remorse and despair, brought it back to his employers ; and that they laid it out in the purchase of a piece of ground just outside the walls of Jerusalem, where strangers might be buried, whose bodies they did not like to have placed near those of Jews. This piece of ground was known by the name of the potter's field ; and St. Matthew closes his account of this whole transaction in the following remarkable words—"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of HIM that was valued, whom they bought of the children of Israel (Margin), and gave them for

² Chap. vii.

³ Chap. viii.

the potter's field, as the LORD appointed me⁴." He says, you see, this was spoken by *Jeremy* the Prophet; but we do not find it in any part of the Book of Jeremiah, but in the 11th chapter of Zechariah, verses 12, 13. This, therefore, remarkably strengthens the opinion which I just now mentioned, that the six last chapters of (what is called) the Book of Zechariah, were written by Jeremiah; and, therefore, that the Book of Zechariah may be considered as concluded at the end of this 8th chapter.

However this may be, the admonition itself, to "love the truth and peace," was plainly well suited, by the compassionate wisdom of the ALMIGHTY, to the particular condition of the Jews at that time. For having learnt, by sad experience, during seventy long years, the miserable condition of captives in a distant land, they were now, as a nation, enabled to feel and acknowledge their happiness, in being once more restored to the homes of their forefathers. How great this happiness was, we have beautifully set forth to us, as in other parts of Scripture, so, especially, in the 126th Psalm, beginning thus—"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

Being then now brought home to their own land, and there being, as it may seem, but little fear of their returning again to their ancient gross sin of idolatry, the warnings of their Prophets were, in a great degree, like John the Baptist's afterwards, of a plain practical kind; preparing men, by degrees, for the approach of the MESSIAH, and calling on them to cherish in themselves such dispositions as were suitable to His glorious Gospel.

Of such a kind was this warning particularly—that as redeemed captives, put as a nation once more in the way of GOD's favour, they should "love the truth and peace."

That the warning must be as much, if not more, applicable to us baptized Christians, redeemed from worse than Babylonish captivity by the Blood of the SON of GOD, and called, in HIM, to a state of salvation, I shall not stay to prove, as it is indeed self-evident; but rather proceed at once to consider how, by the blessing of GOD's good SPIRIT, we may best fulfil the Divine instruction herein offered to us.

⁴ S. Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.

As Christians, then, it is plainly and especially expected of us that we should "love the truth and peace,"—"love," that is, have an earnest, anxious regard for "the truth" of God,—and "peace" one with another,—that we should be thus anxious, not for truth only, or peace only, but for "the truth *and* peace," both together.

But the part of this great subject to which I at present desire to turn your thoughts is, the obligation which is laid on us, to be anxious in our study and search after, and love for religious "truth." For it must be confessed, as indeed being what we must all be well aware of, if we consider, that it is too much the custom, and perhaps particularly in these latter times, for people to be careless and indifferent about this kind of subject, and to take for granted that it signifies little whether they embrace the Truth or not. In proof of this it would be very easy to multiply observations from what is every where going on in the world,—observations which it requires no learning or scholarship to make.

As, for instance, it is unquestionable that a great many people are like Gallio, and "care for none of these things," that is, religion is not a matter which much comes into their thoughts one way or another. For form's sake, or from custom, they may perhaps attend occasionally at some 'place of worship' (as the phrase is). But this, I need not say, is of itself no proof whatever of any serious reflection on the obligations of religion. There are so many reasons besides any good ones which may bring people on a Sunday to church or to a meeting-house. So that this alone proves nothing; but, notwithstanding such attendance, a person may live on without *the least* real care for religious truth, or indeed, for religion at all. This is a plain observation to make, but it is one which ought to be reflected on.

Again, it is a common sentiment often to be met with in newspapers, magazines, and other popular publications,—what many people openly say, and more are inclined to think,—that if a person is but sincere in his religion, it signifies little what that religion is, true or false; if he is but sincere and in earnest, he is, they think, equally acceptable in the sight of God. Now, it is necessary to warn people again and again that this notion is false and dangerous, a mere flattering delusion, one of the many contrivances of the great enemy to bring men's souls to ruin, in which, alas! he is but too successful, as we may well fear.

Others there are who are neither careless, like Gallio of old, nor yet infected with the poison of that false liberality which would confound truth with error, as matters merely indifferent; still they cannot be said to "love the truth," in that they do not put their hearts and minds to it, but satisfy themselves with shallow and imperfect views on the greatest and most concerning of all subjects.

On each of these three descriptions of persons it is my purpose on the present occasion, by God's blessing, to offer a few observations, and but a few, which may be useful to serious and reflecting minds.

In regard of persons who care not at all for religion or religious truth, who live on from year to year entirely regardless of consequences, "having no hope (as the Apostle so emphatically speaks), and without God in the world." Of any person so living, it may surely be said with alarm and apprehension, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

For it is a dictate not merely of revealed religion, but even of natural piety and of common sense, that we should make such inquiry as we can into the truth of our spiritual condition, and at all events, not venture to live on at all hazards as if there were nothing to be lost, whilst every thing might be gained equally well; whereas, in fact, in this miserable system, the very opposite of this holds good; there is every thing to be lost, and nothing to be gained; or, at least, the gain is so trifling as not to be worth mentioning, as must be confessed on a reasonable view of the whole matter, while the loss must be even infinite and eternal. So dangerous is the condition of those who can venture to spend their precious lives in a general neglect of God's truth, His holy word, and will.

As to the second description of persons just now mentioned, namely, those who cherish in themselves and others the delusive notion, that if a person is but sincere in his religion, it signifies little what that religion is,—it is very plain, that such a disposition as this, though often called charitable, is in fact most *uncharitable*, as being quite inconsistent with the love of God's

Truth. The solemn admonition of the inspired prophet is, that we should "love the truth." But persons who profess to think that one belief is as good as another, strike as it were at the very foundations of all religious truth, and instead of showing their love for it, rather do what in them lies to extirpate and root out all sense of its value from men's hearts.

Indeed, it may seem that infidelity itself could devise no more effectual mode of gaining an influence in a Christian nation, than by encouraging this notion, that one form and system of religion is as good as another. For when once it is agreed on that all are equally good, it is but one step further, and that a very natural and easy one, to assert that all are equally worthless. And this we see exemplified at this day, in the rapid progress of various wild infidel opinions in many parts of this kingdom, the effects of which have already appeared in some degree, but which will no doubt assume a more decisive character within no very long time.

As to the third case, namely, of persons who, though neither infected with the poison of infidelity, nor yet of false liberality, yet do not put their hearts and minds to the Truth, and therefore cannot by any means be said to "love" it, as in the text and in other places we are so solemnly enjoined to do,—of such persons it must be confessed, that their religion, though good so far as it goes, is yet of a very shallow and imperfect character.

They have built their house not on a rock, but in the sand; and therefore it will be no matter of wonder if, in the day of trial and temptation, they give way and fall, as we so often see to be the case, with persons too of whom much better things might have been hoped.

This shows of what consequence it is that we not only search out and follow "the truth,"—but more than this, that we also "love" it; that our best feelings and affections be excited in its behalf; and that we esteem it even an honour and a pleasure, when called on, to suffer in the cause of truth.

Such as this doubtless is the suitable disposition for the faithful followers of HIM who so solemnly and emphatically declared in deed as well as in word, "To this end was I born, and for this

cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto The Truth," with the memorable caution subjoined, "Every one that is of The Truth, heareth My voice."

And now I would add a few words of admonition to serious and thoughtful minds, not to be frightened at the name of bigotry, or any other term of reproach, but steadily to cherish in themselves a substantial love of God's holy Truth, always remembering that The Truth will stand and nothing else will; that error however for a time appearing prosperous and successful, as it often does so appear, especially to those whose hearts are too much set on this world's things, must fail us in the end.

It should be our care and anxiety to have our hopes and comforts fixed on a more substantial foundation, that so like the great Apostle, we may have "no need to be ashamed, as knowing in Whom we have believed." Our conscience also bearing us witness that we have loved the truth of CHRIST JESUS, and sought in all ways to uphold and to stand fast by it.

This, I say, should be our care and anxiety, as well as our comfort, let the world go on as it may, and whether there be few or many who sympathise with us, or even if we should be left quite alone.

For Truth is somewhat firm, stedfast, and unmoveable, like its Great Author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," whereas popular opinion is altogether full of change and uncertainty, and never to be depended on in matters of importance, such as are the interests of religion, and of our condition in that great eternity into which we are passing, or rather, I should say, on which we are already entered.

Certainly, it must be allowed, that there is a kind of bigotry which is quite opposed to Christian charity, and inconsistent with that temper of love and peace which is so much required of all faithful Christians. And accordingly we observe that the holy prophet was commissioned to warn God's people of the necessity which was laid upon them, to remember that their zeal must be always tempered with humility, that as the Psalmist of old said, they should "seek peace and ensue it," that is, earnestly follow after it. And, therefore, said Zechariah also, not merely "Love

the truth," but "love the truth *and peace*;" as much as to say, Let not your zeal for the cause of Truth ever make you to forget the obligations of Love and Charity.

Whenever then what is called a *bigoted* spirit leads us to judge unkindly of those whom we think in error, or to treat them with harshness, or to speak of them with scorn or contumely, we may be sure that this does not proceed from our love of the truth and peace, and therefore cannot be such a disposition as the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD will approve and bless. This is the *bad* kind of bigotry, as it may be called.

But there is also a *good* kind of bigotry, a bigotry consistent with the love of truth and peace, and indeed founded on it. This is when we resolve by GOD'S blessing to stand firm in faith and obedience, in faith relying on GOD'S Word, and in obedience on His will, however made known to us, whether through His Holy Scriptures, or by the voice of His Church.

This is the right kind of bigotry, the bigotry of the Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs of ancient days, who would do any thing rather than desert the cause of JESUS CHRIST, that is, the cause of truth and peace.

Of this bigotry, that is, in other words, this patient love for CHRIST, we have no need to be ashamed or to stand back from it. Rather we have reason to be ashamed, the best of us, that we have not stood more firmly up to it; that we have been too often ashamed of CHRIST crucified, and have not fought so manfully under His banner against His and our enemies as we ought to have done, and as we promised in Baptism we would do.

And it might be said to serious and thoughtful persons, let us not be surprised or think it strange if in our endeavours to know and to follow the path marked out for us by the ancient Church, we meet with scorn sometimes, and sometimes with blame, and sometimes both, as high church bigots, and other names which I need not specify. This we need not wonder at, much less be vexed at being so treated; at least our vexation should be with ourselves, that we are not more what true Churchmen should be, and what the ancient Christians were.

To "love the truth and peace" should be as it were our watch-word and our guiding principle. There should be no bitter

unkind feelings against others who differ from us, but an earnest, anxious desire that we all may follow the way of Truth, and especially that all who have erred and are deceived may be led into this way, and among others, ourselves; for who is there of us that will deny, if he looks into his own heart, but that he has been too often deceived and led into error, even when he endeavoured very sincerely to go right? and this, if you consider, is a startling thought.

In conclusion, then, we have only to beseech our Heavenly FATHER, that HE would look down upon us with compassion, that HE would pardon our numerous faults and follies, nor suffer us to remain in that darkness and ignorance of His Truth, in which we must confess we justly deserve to be left. And then we should endeavour, more and more, to be what Christians ought to be, and what the first Christians were.

And though difficulties and perplexities will of course beset us, and this not the less, but the more, in proportion as we are in earnest in following the Truth, yet we have no reason either to be alarmed or ashamed. The cause of GOD and of His Holy Truth is sure to prosper in the end. Herein is the trial of our faith and love, and if in this trial we are but found faithful, that is and will be all to us,—all that we can expect now, all that we can wish for in the great accounting day.

SERMON CCCXL.

THE HUMBLED CHURCHMAN.

ZEPH. iii. 11, 12.

“Thou shalt no more be haughty because of mine holy mountain.

“I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and *they* shall trust in the name of the LORD.”

MOST persons who have given attention to the Scripture History are aware, that the Jews as a nation were very proud of the honour and distinction they enjoyed, as being from old times the peculiar chosen people of JEHOVAH, the LORD of heaven and earth.

In particular may be mentioned the high thoughts of themselves which they indulged, because to them was granted the singular privilege, above all the nations of the world, that “the LORD GOD should dwell among them:” that they should be placed, as it were, as guards and sentinels round the sacred temple, city, and mountain, “the place where God’s honour dwelt.”

To this their privilege frequent reference is made in the books of the Old Testament, especially to their having in their land that “goodly mountain” which Moses saw afar off and longed to visit, that mountain where Abraham offered up his beloved son, that mountain on which was afterwards built the gorgeous temple, and that mountain too, on which the LORD of Glory was crucified. It was then, you see, in every sense a “holy mountain,” and as such it is constantly referred to, as I said, in Holy Scripture; but

in language, often at least, which implies that it was a type and figure of somewhat spiritual and eternal.

To mention a few instances only out of the Psalms,—but there are many in the writings of the other prophets which equally demand attention.—“ Yet have I set My King upon My *holy hill* of Sion.” “ I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and HE heard me out of His *holy hill*.” “ Lord! who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, and who shall rest upon Thy *holy hill*?” “ Who shall ascend unto the *hill of the LORD*, or who shall rise up in His holy place?” “ O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto *Thy holy hill*, and to Thy dwelling.” “ Great is the LORD and highly to be praised, in the city of our GOD, even upon His *holy hill*.” “ *The hill of Sion* is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth.” “ This is *God's hill*, in which it pleaseth HIM to dwell, yea, the LORD will abide in it for ever.” “ O magnify the LORD our GOD, and worship HIM upon *His holy hill*; for the LORD our GOD is holy¹.”

Now from these and innumerable other passages, less familiar to our ears, the attentive reader of Scripture may infer, that the people of God were fully authorized in accounting themselves highly honoured, in having their home, as it were, under the shelter of the Divine presence, and in being at all times able to say to each other, in the words of the prophets Isaiah and Micah, “ Come ye, and let us go up to the *mountain of the Lord*, to the house of the GOD of Israel, and HE will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

But they, alas! like other sons of Adam, became proud and haughty on account of the favour which was showed them. They scorned others who had not the like privileges, accounting them no better than outcasts, or “ dogs,” as they called them.

They looked not beyond the literal meaning, and if any one, like the holy Stephen, or like Stephen's MASTER, would lead them to the higher and spiritual sense of the expression, they would stone him as a blasphemer or crucify him as a traitor.

And therefore the kingdom of GOD was taken from them, and given to those who would bring forth the fruits thereof, accord-

¹ Psalm ii. iii. xv. xxiv. xliii. xlvi. lxviii. xcix.

ing to the warning voice of the prophet in the reign of the good king Josiah, "I will take away out of the midst of thee, them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of Mine holy mountain;" because of thy noble and glorious privileges. But instead of these proud self-confident spirits, "I will leave as a remnant, the 'remnant of Israel²,' in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD."

Perhaps, now, thoughtful persons may see here shadowed out in a manner, after the way of sacred prophecy, the condition of God's people, Christians, at this day in regard of "His holy mountain," the Catholic and Apostolic Church, at least in this country. For is there not reason to fear, both that too many of various and even opposite views are inclined to be haughty and confident, because of this holy mountain, and also that the truth in fact is, though possibly we may be unwilling to allow it, that the Church in the midst of us is truly represented by the, shall I say, few—afflicted and poor people, poor in spirit at least, who still "trust in the name of the LORD?"

As to the first of these considerations, the tendency to over-confidence, or, as the prophet speaking in God's Name terms it, "haughtiness," and this "because of His holy mountain," the Church; the following plain observations, out of many which might be offered, seem to deserve serious reflection from us all.

It is certain that a very large number of persons in this country, some more, some less, what is called 'religiously disposed,' profess themselves to be very well satisfied with our condition as a Christian nation.

It is allowed on all hands, they say, that the English are the most enlightened people on the face of the earth; that civil and religious liberty is better understood, and more thoroughly acted up to here than in any other country; and some will add, that this is owing to the excellent effects of what is called the Church Establishment, equally removed, say they, from the restlessness of dissent on the one hand, and the superstitions of popery on the other. And then they go on to wonder at what they call the

² Verse 13. See also Jer. xxxi. 7. Mic. ii. 12.

absurdity or wickedness of certain people, who, in a vain seeking after perfection, only disquiet and disturb the minds of those who have something else to attend to.

Now in reply to this, it may be said, that surely no one can have any thing better to attend to than Christian truth, and the faithful service of ALMIGHTY GOD. When our Blessed LORD so earnestly directed us all to long and labour after perfection, adding, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;” and when HE taught us all to make it the unceasing subject of our prayers that His “will may be done on earth” by Christians, “as it is in heaven” by His Holy Angels; surely it cannot be either absurd or wicked to make some attempts, however poor and weak, towards the accomplishment of His most blessed and merciful purposes.

But how does the case stand with us at this day? and must it not be confessed that, as a Church, our practice most wonderfully contradicts our professions?

To mention a few instances out of many: the Church Prayer Book most plainly teaches—does it not?—the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; in other words, that in Holy Baptism we are born again, and made GOD’S children. This, I say, is most plainly taught in the Baptism service, also in the Catechism and Confirmation service. Yet, how few are there who really believe this—I mean, of professed Church people; how many, who think such an opinion little or nothing better than a Popish error!

The Church Prayer Book most plainly directs—does it not?—that there shall be service in every church every day, morning and evening. There is an appointed service, Psalms and Lessons, for every day in the week, quite as much as for Sundays. Yet, in this great and populous country of England, and all her extensive and wealthy Colonies, how is this plain, *most* plain, rule disregarded, and meant to be disregarded, by the great majority, both ministers and people!

The Church Prayer Book most plainly teaches, that, in offering our solemn public prayers to ALMIGHTY GOD, in His holy house, all should kneel upon their knees; but now, not only is the rule itself regularly and avowedly disregarded by multitudes, but also by the encroachments and luxuries of pews, and in other ways, it

has come to pass in very many of our churches, that, as gentlefolks will not kneel if they can, so poor people cannot kneel if they would.

The Church Prayer Book most plainly teaches, that it is our duty to hold in solemn and grateful remembrance the Apostles and other holy men, who have departed this life in God's faith and fear. But a very large majority of those who are called Church people are quite against the Prayer Book in this respect, and openly avow their disregard of Saints' days, and all other such observances, as mere relics of a by-gone superstition.

The Church Prayer Book most plainly teaches, that the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper is far more than a mere commemoration or remembrance of our SAVIOUR'S death; but is even the communion of His Body and Blood to all faithful, penitent souls. How little this is thought of, or reflected on, I need not say.

I might easily go on to multiply instances in proof of what I alleged, namely, that Church people, for the most part, have small cause to be proud of their Church, or to boast much of it, considering how they treat it, how they despise and neglect it.

By this, their unfeeling, inconsistent conduct, they of course give great cause of triumph to the adversaries; both to those who are against all religion, and to those who, either by what they have added or what they have taken away, have done a wrong to God's truth, and to the souls of their brethren. Of these, the Roman Church may be said to have *added to* Catholic truth many fancies and customs, unsanctioned, as well by Holy Scripture, as by the authority and traditions of the ancient Church. Whilst the innumerable sects and parties, calling themselves Christian, but renouncing all obedience to, and communion with, Christian bishops,—these have *taken away* from God's truth, some more, some less; and false doctrine and heresy have generally been both the effect and the punishment of schism.

What then, whilst we contemplate the failings and corruptions of others, whether societies or individuals, have we any reason to boast—we, of the Church of England? Surely not: surely we have no reason to "be haughty," because of the great privileges vouchsafed to us, the "holy mountain" of our God.

Rather we have reason to humble ourselves to the dust, at the consideration of what is the state of things among us, so astonishingly inconsistent and self-contradictory. The only hope is in the Divine promise—"I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the Name of the LORD." By an afflicted and poor people, in this passage, is meant such as are beautifully described as "souls going stooping,"—"O LORD, look down from Thy house and consider us; bow down Thine ear, O LORD, to hear us. For the soul that is greatly vexed, which goeth stooping and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul, will give Thee praise and righteousness, O LORD³." And, in the New Testament, such dispositions are often set before us, as authorized to expect an especial blessing from our SAVIOUR and JUDGE: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," or refreshment.

The remnant of true Israelites, then, the afflicted and poor people, are unquestionably those who mourn deeply and habitually for their sins and imperfections; stedfastly purposing and endeavouring to lead a new life; those who labour and are heavy laden, at the thought of their guilt and unworthiness, and who take refuge in the mercy of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, and come to HIM for rest, that is, are willing to take His yoke upon themselves, and to learn of HIM meekness, lowliness, and obedience, as HE HIMSELF said. Persons who act thus, however few in number, however low in circumstances, however weak and despised, are, humanly speaking, the strength of the Church of England, and its only true supporters; all else is but a broken reed, mere 'establishment,' as the phrase is, the strength of mere human support, which may give way any day, and crumble to pieces, like all other works of mortal man.

Such, then, being our privileges, and such our difficulties—our privileges, I mean, to be able to live and die faithful members of the Church and Body of CHRIST; and our difficulties great also, in regard, especially, of the inconsistent, self-contradictory lives of (must I not say?) the great majority of us,—we ought to know

³ Baruch ii. 16. 18.

and feel that it greatly concerns us to take care how we trust to the world's example, in this respect particularly.

By the world's example, is to be understood the conduct of the generality of people around us, especially those above us, or those who have influence over us as relations, or neighbours, or acquaintances. Such are "the world" to us, each of us, in our several stations.

It concerns us all greatly continually to bear in mind, that our GOD and SAVIOUR, and His holy will, is infinitely more to us than the fairest prospects, or the best friends we can look to here. In a short time these must all have passed away from us, or we from them, but HE to whom, if we are faithful members of CHRIST'S Church, we are invited and authorized to look,—HE will never fail those who yield their hearts and lives to HIM. HE is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

With this recollection as much as possible kept alive in us, the humble Christian may best meet the difficulties and perplexities in which he must expect to be involved at all times, and especially in the present condition of what is called 'the Christian world,'—difficulties no doubt sent upon us for trial and correction, and therefore evidences of God's mercy.

Now, it is one particular symptom and natural accompaniment (so to say) of a state of difficulty, that people are disposed to lay the blame on each other. It is so with individuals, and it is the same with companies and parties, even in matters of religion itself. Such is human nature, fallen and corrupted.

The humble Christian then prays, and strives with all earnestness, to be kept free from this dangerous temper. Whilst he is most anxious to be (however unworthy) at least a sincere and faithful member of CHRIST'S holy Church, he at the same time is no less anxious to keep clear of the sin of rashly judging others,—a sin into which religiously-disposed persons are too apt to fall. But this, at least, is no sign of their religious views being correct. For whatever comfort we may justly derive from the thought of ourselves being in the right way in any respect, it ought surely to be no comfort or matter of triumph, but a most painful reflection, that those who differ from us may be in the wrong.

Such an one, according to the Prophet's warning, is far from

being "haughty because of God's holy mountain," under which he trusts he has found shelter and security, but rather desires to be among the number of the "poor and afflicted people, who trust in the Name of the Lord."

Again (as a wise and holy man has said), "in the war between truth and error, virtue and vice are wont to make a truce," or rather, almost a sort of peace; that is to say, in other words, there is danger that when religious disputes and controversies run high, people shall think less of the plain rules of virtue and holiness, and if others are of our side or opinion, we are inclined to judge very lightly of *their* faults and failings. Now this kind of disposition is greatly to be guarded against, as for other reasons, so because encouragement is hereby given to worldly-minded persons, who always, alas! will be the larger number, to think, or at least to say, that, after all, religious people are nothing better than hypocrites, and that religion as often does as much harm as good to society, if not more, and therefore that we may do very well without it, or, at least, without so much of it.

Now, the best way of resisting and getting rid of these miserable and blasphemous fancies, is still to bear in mind (what is the real truth of the case), that, as the Apostle speaks, we have the greatest of all treasures "in earthen vessels," and that therefore we are not to wonder if the practice of Christians falls short of their profession in a very remarkable degree.

We are not to wonder at it; nevertheless, we are earnestly to pray for a better state of things, and to labour after it too as opportunity shall offer; still remembering that, though perfection is not attained in this world either by churches or individual Christians, yet no person or church should rest contented with any measure of holiness short of perfection. In other words, it is always a very bad sign when Christians are satisfied with the attainment they have made, and are not endeavouring (as one great Apostle expresses it) to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and (as another) to "press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling."

Now, to lead this kind of life is the very opposite of "haughtiness," and any confident resting in privileges; it is to feel ourselves at all times to be "an afflicted and poor people," very

unworthy of all that is done for us, and yet praying and striving to become more worthy. Of such the Prophet expressly says, "they trust in the Name of the LORD;" the worthiness they seek is, in fact, none of their own by any kind of claim of right; in that Name wherein alone is salvation, is all their trust; in HIM, "who of GOD is made to them Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption; according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD."

The time may come, perhaps before long, when Christian people (some at least) shall awake, as it were, out of the deadly slumber in which they too generally are involved, and bethink themselves of their real condition. GOD grant that it may not be too late. At all events, we are bound to caution all persons who account themselves to be what are called Church people,—we call on such persons to ask themselves candidly and seriously, what their claim is to the name; whether they really wish to act up to the plain rules of the Church; whether, in fact, they are not deceiving themselves with a name—a name, and nothing more.

Now, we may deceive *ourselves*, but we cannot deceive ALMIGHTY GOD, as we all very well know. "HE that knows what is in man," detects our hypocrisy now, and will call us to account for it in His day of final judgment.

Truly our only refuge is, in company with His "afflicted and poor people," a small company at the most, and weak and imperfect at the best,—nevertheless, with them to seek HIM far more earnestly than we have ever yet done, to call upon HIM unceasingly 'in the voice of His Church,' to avoid all selfishness in whatever shape, to "rejoice if, in any respect, we may be counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name."

But then we must be particularly careful and anxious to ascertain that our religious views and principles are real and practical; that they are heart-deep, and not merely floating, as it were, on the surface.

They who have cast off haughtiness and all vain confidences; who are content to live in affliction and poverty of spirit; and who withal really trust in the One Great Name wherein alone is salvation (such as are these described in the LORD'S words

by His prophet); *they* are, as it were, the pattern and model, whom we, in our pitiable inferiority, should propose to ourselves. We should follow them as they follow CHRIST. Then religion and holiness would not be what men, in their strange self-contradiction, are too apt to regard them, as somewhat limited, only or chiefly, to particular days or places, but every day would be to them, as it were, a LORD'S day, and we should feel ourselves always as in the presence of JESUS CHRIST.

Now, I do not deny but that it is a high and difficult aim to lead this sort of life; but I do say also, that unless we are earnestly, and without all pretence, endeavouring so to live; no professions, no feelings, no confidences will be found of any value in that day when our true characters shall be laid open before men and Angels.

SERMON CCCXLI.

GOD'S COMPLAINT OF HIS PEOPLE.

JER. v. 31.

“ My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”

THE holy prophet at the twenty-fifth and preceding verses of this chapter, had solemnly warned the chosen people, that, according to the course and rule of God's providential government, public distresses are occasioned by public sins. He had made special mention of God's mercy in sending men “ the former and the latter rain in their season,” and “ reserving unto them the appointed weeks of the harvest.” But to deprivations and afflictions of every kind, whenever they happen, the severe warning is no doubt applicable, more or less, and always will be. “ Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.” And this teaches us Christians also, in all distress of mind, body, or estate, to consider carefully and without delay, what sins or negligences may have given occasion for such chastisement, and so without delay to repent and amend, and this substantially and in earnest.

But at the next verse, the prophet, speaking in God's Name, seems, as it were, to break off abruptly; expressing at the same time surprise and sorrow at the thought of the “ iniquities” and “ sins” which he had just referred to. “ For,” says he, “ it is too true, among *My people* are found wicked men.” This expression of endearment, “ *My people*,” as thus used, is very emphatic, and of frequent occurrence in the Holy Scriptures, as, for example,

2 Chron. vii., to Solomon, "If *My people*, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek My Face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin."

And in the Psalms very frequently, "*My people* would not hear my voice, and Israel would not obey Me." "O that *My people* would have hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" and also in the later prophets, "Israel doth not know, *My people* doth not consider." "HE, the MESSIAH, was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of *My people* was He stricken." "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show *My people* their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins."

And especially in the prophet Jeremiah, times almost out of number: "*My people* have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." "*My people* have forsaken Me." "*My people* have forgotten Me, days without number." "*My people* is foolish, they have not known Me." "Among *My people* are found wicked men." "The prophets prophesy falsely, and *My people* love to have it so."

Thus did the ALMIGHTY FATHER deplore the unfeeling, ungrateful conduct of His adopted children. Nor was it mere common disobedience that they were guilty of. Like their posterity in later times, they shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men, would neither go in themselves, nor suffer those who were entering to go in.

So these Jews of old were even glad to increase the number of sinners, took pains and trouble to bring others into the like wickedness and ruin with themselves, as is thus figuratively expressed by the prophet: "They lay wait, as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men; as a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit." They gather round them persons whom they have deceived and injured by their unprincipled language and bad example.

Thus by these evil means, they come to have great influence, and to obtain perhaps high stations in the world, "therefore they are become great," says the prophet, "and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine." But their prosperity only makes them the more hardened against all sense of their duty to God and man, "Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked." "They

judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper, and the right of the needy do they not judge." However, the eye of GOD is upon all such workers of iniquity, be their station what it may, and in His appointed time HE will bring on them His just retribution. For such are His words of threatening, now almost passed into a proverb. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

And then to sum up in a few words their corrupt and almost desperate state, their GOD and SAVIOUR thus laments over His chosen people. "A wonderful and horrible thing, [astonishment and filthiness, Margin,] is committed," carried on, "in the land." "The prophets," whose special business it is to declare GOD's truth without fear or favour, they "prophesy falsely." "The priests," whose duty above all is to "keep knowledge," even the saving knowledge of GOD, and to stand before HIM to minister unto HIM, they are full of ambition and worldly thoughts, desirous to "bear rule," to be "lords over GOD's heritage, instead of being examples to the flock," and this "by their means;" that is, by the effect of the teaching of the false prophets. And to finish all, "My people love to have it so." There is no anxiety for a better state of things, but are all fairly well satisfied that the truth of GOD should be set aside, and religion be made a matter of mere worldly speculation and interest. What then must be the consequence of such a state of things? "What will ye do in the end thereof?"

Such is the solemn question which the ALMIGHTY condescended to put before His faithful servants of old; those few devout persons, who, like their good King Josiah, saw and lamented the decayed state of religion and GOD's service, and did what they could to remedy it. For it is very observable, that when in this passage almost all ranks and orders among the Jews are severely rebuked, judges, prophets, priests, and people, against the king nothing is said, for it was the good and earnest-minded Josiah, of whom so remarkable a testimony is left—"Like unto him was there no king before him that turned to the LORD, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, neither after him arose there any like him." Yet in his reign, and with his example before them, could these things be said, "among My

people are found wicked men." "Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked; they judge not the cause of the fatherless, nor the right of the needy. The prophets prophesy falsely; the priests bear rule by their means, and My people love to have it so."

Now as all Holy Scriptures are written for our learning, and the history of God's people of old is especially intended to set before us the difficulties and dangers which attend the Christian's course, so in this whole passage, but particularly in the concluding words, we may be sure that there is much matter for warning and instruction contained for ourselves.

And wherein this consists, let us, with the aid of God's merciful Spirit, briefly consider, in a few instances out of many, relating, first to the faith, then to the practice, of Christian people.

Now as to the rule of faith, or religious opinion in general, must it not be confessed, that "people love to have it," in a good degree, uncertain and changeable, that is, they do not like to be tied down to a definite and fixed creed; but in religion, as in other things, they like to follow their own private judgment and taste? But this plainly must be confessed to be wrong, so long as the rule of the inspired Apostle is confessed to be right, when he says, "Follow the faith of those that have the rule over you, (the primitive bishops,) who have spoken to you the word of God, considering the end of their conversation," the tenor and object of all their conduct and instruction, "JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, today, and for ever;" and then immediately adding, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." Herein implying, among other merciful warnings, that true Christian faith is somewhat fixed and real, not flitting and changing about, one thing to one person, and another to another, as the world would fain make us believe, and as we, alas! too often are ready to agree to.

Again, it may be considered, that the primitive doctrine of "one Catholic and Apostolic Church," is greatly forgotten or neglected amongst us, and "people love to have it so." That is to say, (as all persons of observation must be aware, and all sincere Christians must deplore,) there prevails amongst us a wonderful indifference about Church unity; just as if our Blessed Lord and His

Apostles had left no directions or warnings on the subject, or as if what was of importance in the early days of the Church was not of importance now.

And this indifference is not accidental, but fixed and deliberate ; so that people think it not only not wrong or hurtful, but even matter for comfort and satisfaction, that there should be such divisions and differences as there are in (what is called) the Christian world.

Surely here, alas ! the prophet's lamentation is but too applicable—" My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?" What will, and must be, the consequences of this neglect of Catholic unity ?

Or, to take another instance, how easily do Christians satisfy themselves with regard to the great essential article of faith, the forgiveness of sins ! On this most important of all subjects, views and opinions are hastily taken up, often erroneous, and more often still imperfect, and people " love to have it so ;" they would even prefer some degree of error and imperfection, to having their minds disturbed (as the expression is) with doubts and fears.

But surely it is a good thing for us to have our minds occasionally thus ' disturbed ;' to be made to feel that, perhaps, we are not quite so safe as we had fancied ourselves to be.

And then an error or mistake on a matter of such vast importance cannot be a slight evil, or of small consequence. In some matters it is easy to rectify a mistake ; but to be content with a wrong judgment on the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, and the terms of our acceptance with God, shows an indifference and disregard towards the whole truth of the Gospel.

And yet, alas ! this is too often the conduct of Christian people.

In like manner do various notions prevail (and people " love to have it so") respecting the two great Sacraments of the Gospel, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

With regard to Baptism, of which such excellent and glorious things are spoken in the Holy Scriptures, in the writings of the ancient fathers, and in the Church Prayer Book, yet how little is it valued by the generality of Christians, even of those who are more religiously disposed !

Of which I will only offer one proof: that in all the publications of a very popular society, called the "Religious Tract Society," (and I suppose these publications amount to some hundreds of thousands, and are to be met with every where,) yet, I may venture to say, there is not a *single one* which agrees with the doctrine of Scripture and of the Church with regard to the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. And this any one may be satisfied of, who will take the trouble to compare these tracts, or any of them, with the Baptismal Services in the Prayer Book, or with the Church Catechism.

And the same kind of observation applies also to the other Holy Sacrament. The doctrine taught respecting it in these popular tracts is very different indeed from that which is found in the Bible, in the writings of the ancient fathers, or in the Church Prayer Book, as any one may easily see.

And all that can be said is, that people "love to have it so;" they do not wish to have their hearts and minds *really* raised to high and heavenly things, to "holy mysteries" (as is said in the Communion Service); they do not like to be required to believe more than they can understand.

Now, this not liking to believe more than we can understand, is the very ground of infidelity, however little people may be aware of it,—and in this way particularly, under the mask of religion, does Satan draw on the vain and self-confident to maintain errors and false doctrines which at first they would have regarded with abhorrence.

Another consideration, having reference to this same subject, is of the notion which we are so apt to cherish, that the state of what is called 'the Christian world' is, on the whole, tolerably good and encouraging; that Christians conduct themselves as properly as can reasonably be expected; and that it is a pity people's minds should be puzzled and perplexed with schemes of improvement and visionary notions of our attempting or thinking to be like the first Christians, Saints, and Martyrs, in life and death.

Now, when persons speak or think in this way, at least with any seriousness, they must either imagine that we have a different Gospel from that which the first Christians had, or else, which in fact is but the same thing in other words, they

must suppose that greater excuses are to be made for us of these latter days than could have been made for our forefathers.

I need not say how false and delusive both these notions are, nor how dangerous and fatal are their effects, as, alas! we have but too constant evidence on all sides of us.

And here again, all that can be said is, that "people love to have it so;" they do not wish or intend to think otherwise; they are fully persuaded that, in the matter of religion, the world goes on as well as can be expected; that it is absurd to look for perfection here; and that it is mere vanity and wild enthusiasm to think of acting on any such views.

And now, asks the LORD, by His holy prophet, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" what will and must be the certain consequences of this kind of self-delusion in God's people?

Thus, for example, when persons go on for many years, or even through their whole life, wavering and uncertain about the great principles of their religious creed, under the notion that such a habit of mind is but the exercise of Christian liberty (so miscalled), and that to hold to fixed views and principles, is little or nothing better than slavish bigotry,—what can be the end of such unsettled miserable fancies, but callous hardness of heart,—a conscience void of offence neither towards GOD nor towards men? And surely against such a state as this, the whole Gospel of our LORD and SAVIOUR is (as it were) one continued warning.

Again, it is to be considered what must be the end and consequences of a person's neglecting wilfully the great essential Gospel doctrine of Church unity. I say wilfully, because it cannot be doubted, that many persons do neglect it, not altogether wilfully, but partly at least in ignorance,—though for that ignorance, no doubt, they must give account.

But for wilful deliberate neglect of that which the holy JESUS so earnestly prayed for, and enjoined on all who profess and call themselves Christians, what excuse can be made? and how is it possible to calculate the evil effects which such conduct produces? as HE HIMSELF warned us; "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

These well-known but awful words of our Blessed LORD, among other solemn thoughts, must suggest this to the seriously-disposed mind—that those who, by their example, encourage others, and especially their weaker brethren, in direct acts of disobedience and disorderliness towards the Church—the Spouse and Body of CHRIST—such persons endanger not only their own souls, but those of others, they know not how many.

So also in regard of the crude, hasty notions which Christian people take up on the great Gospel doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, “What will ye do in the end thereof?” what are and must be the consequences of such rash confidence?

To say the least, we can attribute to no cause more powerfully than this, the careless manner in which Christian people, so many of them, live, and not only live but die, having no doubts or fears about their eternal condition, but imagining that a fancied trust in the Blood of the LORD JESUS CHRIST (for too often, alas! it can scarcely be considered as more than a fancy) is to ensure their salvation, and seal them (as it were) for heaven, for the rewards promised to those “who, by patient continuance in well-doing, have sought for glory, and honour, and immortality.”

And so too with reference to the two special Sacraments of the Gospel, and the neglect which they too commonly receive at the hands and hearts of Christian people,—here also we may say with the holy prophet (or One greater than any prophet), “What will ye do in the end thereof?” What are and must be the certain effects of men's disregard of such holy mysteries? And is there not the greatest reason to be convinced, that it is owing to men's low notions of these heavenly Sacraments, considering them as forms, mere ‘ordinances’ (as they are presumptuously termed), that a heartless unfeeling infidel spirit is secretly, or rather openly, making such way in what is called the Christian world?

For the present I only add, that these are matters much to be reflected on by all serious and thoughtful persons, because, in regard of them, we are to blame, all of us, no doubt, more or less.

SERMON CCCXLII.

GOD'S COMPLAINT OF HIS PEOPLE.

JER. v. 31.

“ My people love to have it so ; and what will ye do in the end thereof ? ”

WE have before considered, that in this whole passage, ALMIGHTY GOD condescends to express His fatherly care and love for “ His people,”—still *His* people, though ungrateful, and disobedient. And (if we may so speak with reverence) what seems to have given most pain to the FATHER of all mercies is, that His chosen ones not merely revolted and rebelled, but that they “ had a revolting and rebellious *heart* ; ” that they not merely endured to live in the midst of wickedness and falsehood, but that they “ loved to have it so. ” In which we are reminded of the solemn and forcible manner in which the Apostle St. Paul sums up the character and description¹ of what we should call persons of thoroughly bad principle : “ They know the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death. Yet they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. ”

For when persons are involved (more or less) in falsehood and wrong,—in what is false in opinion or wrong in practice, and “ love to have it so, ”—when they dislike those who would draw them from such things, and “ have pleasure in them that do them, ”—then, to human view, the case is hopeless, and the bitter rebuke contained in the sacred proverb, becomes, alas ! but too

¹ Rom. i. ult.

certainly applicable : " Seest thou a man that is wise in his own conceit ? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

And this is a warning which no doubt we all need, more or less. We all need to have our careless self-confidence brought low, and to be made to feel that we are nothing of ourselves, and that, as our LORD and SAVIOUR taught us, " except we be converted, and become as little children," humble, teachable, and obedient, " we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Let us, then, in continuation of what was offered to your thoughts on a former occasion, call to mind a few more familiar instances in which we are in danger of going wrong (as God's people of old did),—without sorrow or remorse, nay, without even being disposed to allow that there is any thing to be sorry for.

For when people do what is wrong, and " love to have it so," it is not *as* wrong that they love it, but the great enemy always cloaks it over to their consciences with an outside appearance of something right and good.

There is a notion or fancy prevailing, no doubt very widely, among Christian people, that religion and morality are two distinct things,—so distinct, that it is supposed a person may be a moral respectable man (as it is called) without being at all religious ; and again, that another may be what is called very religious, or at least in some degree religious, and yet be by no means a person (say) of steadiness, or integrity, or liberality, or may be wanting in compassion for the distresses of others. Thus what God hath joined together, man puts asunder, and " loves to have it so " separated.

And yet, if there be any truth in the Gospel of the LORD JESUS CHRIST,—wherever, at least, that Gospel is known,—how can he be a good man who is not also a sincere Christian ? how can he be a sincere Christian who is not also a good man ?

But people do not love to have it so ; they would rather think that a person may go through life with a great many good qualities, even if he have little or no religion ; that if, towards the end of his days, he grows rather more serious, that is all very proper,—of course he ought to do so,—but that to make a *business* of religion all one's life long, is *too much*.

Now this is, in other words, the same as saying (what infidels *do* say), that we can be good enough without the Gospel.

But "what will ye do in the end thereof?" what must be the condition of the nation or the individual who endeavours to reconcile holy professions with immoral practices? Surely nothing but ruin can follow, unless prevented by timely repentance and amendment.

Again, it is to be considered how desirous people are, if they do have any religion, to have such as is pleasant, and especially such as shall give them as little *trouble* as possible. 'Religion without trouble or expense,' may be accounted the motto of the Christian world (so-called).

The whole Bible, as it were, the Law, Prophets, Psalms, and Gospel, join together to proclaim the falsehood of such a notion, —to warn us that we must not seek, but "*strive* to enter in at the strait gate;" that we must "*press* toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS," &c. But "people do not love to have it so." They would rather have religion plain, easy, and agreeable. Long preparations, serious thoughts, anxious doubts and fears, earnest and importunate prayers, patient obedience to Church rules, requiring, perhaps, a good portion of time, and considerable self-conflict—all these things, alas! we are inclined to think too much and overstrained, and that we shall do well enough without taking so much trouble.

But then the question arises, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" Of what value is our religion that gives us no trouble? How different from the religion of the Prophets and Apostles, the Martyrs and Saints of ancient days, who certainly were never willing to "offer to the LORD their GOD of that which cost them nothing!"

And doubtless if we expect to meet them hereafter, we must pray, and endeavour to be as they were here. We may not be called to suffer as they did, but we are called on to fulfil the same principles and rules of holy practice. And theirs was not a religion without trouble, nor did they love or expect to have it so.

In like manner as to more particular considerations, the holy

Sacrament of Baptism is certainly, as has been observed by a most wise and holy man, 'such a blessing as this world hath not the like,' being the 'seal and instrument,' as the Article says, of our new-birth, or ingrafting into the Church and Body of CHRIST.

But people do not love to have it so; they would rather, as I before observed, think Baptism a mere form, of little importance, some will say, of none at all, being herein quite opposed to the teaching of our SAVIOUR and His Apostles, and to the practice of the Christian Church in every age. But all this divine instruction avails nothing against popular fancy, which bears down all before it like a torrent, and Holy Baptism with all its affecting circumstances is, for the most part, treated by us Church people with the most determined scorn and contempt that any thing can possibly be. Perhaps we may say we do not mean it, but certainly so it is; and the only reason is, because people love to have it so.

No wonder that so many who are there dedicated to GOD do not lead the rest of their lives according to that beginning. No wonder that it is with us as of old, that GOD "curses our blessings," and the things which should have been for our wealth," our everlasting good, "become unto us an occasion of falling."

Let it be considered also how sadly in many places and parishes the holy cause of Christian education is neglected.

The best of instruction is that which is obtained at home from religious parents and friends; I say, a *Christian home* is the best school. But people do not love to have it so. [So among other contrivances we are forced to have Sunday Schools. But in many parishes, it may be asked, who subscribes any thing scarcely to the Schools? Of the little that is paid, the chief part often comes not from the living, but from the dead. Meanwhile, there is frequently neither room sufficient, nor books sufficient, nor *any thing like* decent accommodation for the poor children in the house of GOD.] And altogether it can only be said that the cause of Christian education is at a *very low* ebb amongst us, and that people love to have it so; that is, they would rather that things should remain as they are, miserable and wretched, and producing effects most disastrous, than be put to trouble, expense, or

inconvenience, with the hope of remedying the evil, which might be done, at least in some slight degree.

And these things I mention, not by way of reproach, but for the consideration of serious persons, and with the hope that some plan may be devised, if possible, for putting an end to so crying an evil—an evil for which we are all answerable.

Another thing to be noticed as an instance of the force of popular prejudice, and men's dislike of trouble and responsibility in religious matters, is the great neglect, and in many instances contempt of the holy rite of Confirmation, which has now for a long time prevailed in this country. Nevertheless, Confirmation is an Apostolical ordinance, and without it one may almost say that, in a certain sense, we are but half baptized². Yet Christians, and those too who are called Church people, very frequently look upon it as a mere barren ceremony, of which neither if we partake are we the better, neither if we partake not are we the worse.

People "love to have it so;" but what has been and will be the end thereof? Surely nothing less than general confusion, lawlessness, and apostasy, as might too easily be proved³.

Also it is a remarkable fact in the history of modern religion, how anxious people are to limit it to one day in the week. One would think they considered it almost as wrong to be religious on a week day, as not to be so on the Sabbath day (so called).

I call it a remarkable circumstance for two reasons:—1. Because in all the New Testament, there is no kind of command or direction either of the Blessed JESUS, or of His Apostles, which can be supposed to tend this way or have this meaning; and 2. Because such constant witness is borne against it, not only by the Church in her appointed daily service, but also by Dissenters and others, in prayer meetings, evening lectures, missionary meetings, &c., bearing unconscious witness to the great truth,

² "Confirmation is the perfection of Baptism."—Bp. Wilson, *Sacra Privata*.

³ "There is no question but that most of that ignorance, impiety, profaneness, want of charity, of union and order, which we complain of, is owing to the neglect or abuse of this one ordinance."—Id. *Parochialia*.

that (as the Catechism teaches) to the Christian *every day*, and not the LORD'S Day only, should be a Sabbath. Nevertheless, people do not love to have it so, and what do we see in the end thereof?

We see that God's service is made so little account of, that a person may neglect it altogether, from one year's end to another, (I speak advisedly,) without being considered either by others or by himself as any the worse Christian.

And this again makes others think that if they go to a 'place of worship' regularly, or occasionally, on a Sunday, this will do *very well* in the way of religion, and is what they hope God will be satisfied with, particularly as it is more than so many persons do. It may be asked, when persons talk or think like this, have they not forgotten the first and great commandment both of the Law and the Gospel: "Thou shalt *love* the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength?" or what do they think is the meaning of that commandment?

Again, it is to be considered how sadly and imperfectly the service of ALMIGHTY GOD is conducted in this Church of England. And yet, I suppose, we are not aware of it, but rather "love to have it so." I say 'sadly and imperfectly,' because so differently from what the ancient Church would have desired, and from the plain rules of the Prayer Book.

Thus the services are crowded one upon another which used to be divided. Instead of one house of GOD, in which rich and poor equally shall meet together, the church is portioned out into so many little rooms, where *respectable* people may sit and be as comfortable as they can, and poor people and poor children are thrust away into aisles and cold corners, and of course are not very anxious to come where they are so treated. Instead of ancient Psalms and Anthems, duly chanted to ancient tunes, we have two translations of the Psalms in metre, of which, perhaps, it is hard to say which is the most unsatisfactory. And as to Hymns, (except the Morning and Evening, by that holy confessor, Bishop Ken,) almost all those which are used in many churches, though of course containing somewhat that is good, are more or less objectionable, as indeed was to be expected, seeing they were nearly all, or quite all, composed by Dissenters from the Church, especially by these four—

Dr. Watts, Dr. Doddridge, Mr. John Wesley, and his brother Mr. Charles Wesley.

It is, then, no wonder that they are so different from the Prayer Book, and that so many things occur in them which can hardly be reconciled with the doctrine and reverential language of the ancient Church. And other proofs might be mentioned of our practical imperfection. Nevertheless, people "love to have it so;" and, if the truth must be spoken, we are all of us too easily satisfied about God's service, as if any thing were good enough for *Him*.

Rather we ought to consider "what we shall do in the end hereof." We ought not to rest satisfied with an imperfect service of our GOD and SAVIOUR, but endeavour, if in no other way, at least by our prayers, that, as in the primitive days, the Church of CHRIST may once again arise out of the dust, and shine forth in the beauty of holiness. "With men indeed this is impossible, but with GOD all things are possible."

At all events, without the Divine blessing all must go wrong; and we cannot expect to have that blessing on the Church of England, unless her ministers and members return back to those ancient rules and principles which regulated the Christian Church, long before Popery was ever heard of.

I might go on to suggest to thoughtful persons other considerations which must lead us too certainly to confess, that now, as of old, what God's people "love to have" is very often opposite to His holy will, and hurtful to our own everlasting interests.

The way in which the Sacrament of Matrimony (for so it is called in the Homily) is now insulted and degraded, and made even worse than a heathen ceremony (for the heathens *did* have *some* form of religion in all their marriages)—this is a startling instance of what Ultra-Protestantism will lead men to.

I say Ultra-Protestantism, for Presbyterian Scotland and Presbyterian Geneva first invented this atrocious custom, and infidel France next followed it, and now England is involved in the guilt. And surely here we may ask, what will be the consequences? "what shall we do in the end thereof?" What but suffer the Divine vengeance for such profaneness!

Of a kindred character with this, I would only just mention, is the tendency of certain recent enactments to thrust CHRIST'S poor out of sight, to be supported at the very least possible expense.

“My people love to have it so;” but how will it be in the end? [Let Socialists and Chartists say.]

And to mention one other instance: the notorious want of all discipline in our Church is an evil of so great magnitude in every way, that it is scarcely possible to estimate the dreadful effects resulting from it.

Yet “people love to have it so;” they do not like to be checked in their career of drunkenness and impurity, of heresy and schism. Therefore Church censures are regarded as an infringement of Christian liberty; and sinners, who disagree in other respects, agree at least in this, that the voice of the Church is not worthy to be listened to, and therefore that voice has now for many years been silent, or has spoken (as the Prophet says) “out of the dust.”

Such and so low is our condition; and, though some good persons hope that our lost blessings and privileges may be restored, yet surely there is more reason to fear lest what we, as a nation and a Church, have so long and so sadly neglected, should, in GOD'S just judgment, never be given back to us again.

In conclusion—we cannot doubt that it greatly concerns all sincere and faithful followers of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to be cautious at all times indeed, but in these especially, how they trust to popular opinion, or worldly customs, in the matter of religion. GOD said of old, “*My people* love to have it so,” and yet the end of this was evil beyond description.

Therefore, it is not enough to excuse errors to say, that *God's people* love them, or approve of them; GOD'S people went wrong formerly, and GOD'S people may go wrong now. Rather we must trust to the voice of GOD HIMSELF, speaking in His Holy Church and Holy Bible.

And if, when so seeking to be guided, we do in any respect err through inadvertence, yet if, with humility and an obedient heart, we hold fast to HIM, we may have the great comfort of feeling assured that our error shall not be our ruin.

We may have the comfort of knowing, that HE who dièd for us on the Cross will not forsake us whenever we take up the Cross for His sake ; also, we may have the comfort of knowing that that HOLY SPIRIT who in ancient days taught the hearts of GOD'S faithful people, will teach our hearts also, provided only we cast ourselves down before HIM in deep humility, lowliness, penitence, and obedience. We have His own merciful word of promise—
“ Him that (so) cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

SERMON CCCXLIII.

INFANT BAPTISM, AND CONFIRMATION.

ST. MARK x. 15, 16.

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

“And HE took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.”

WE ought, certainly, always to consider it as a great mercy and favour of ALMIGHTY GOD towards us, that HE condescends to set before us, in various ways, the truth, the importance, and the danger of our condition. Especially, it is a point deserving of most serious reflection, that in the Holy Scriptures such pains are taken (if one may so speak with reverence) to impress on our consciences the infinite consequences depending on early education; the vast importance of our being led, even from our very earliest years, “to know the GOD of our fathers,” and taught to “serve HIM with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.”

The HOLY SPIRIT, in this well-known passage of St. Mark's Gospel, offers to the minds of serious persons a very affecting instance of that Divine love and condescension which I have now referred to. For it seems, that on some occasion during the course of our Blessed LORD's ministry, HE had been greatly harassed (as HE often was) by the questions and disputations of the self-confident Pharisees; to which also, as it appears, His disciples were inclined to attach too much importance. At this time, some persons who had been struck with admiration at the miracles and teaching of our SAVIOUR, and knew not how suf-

ficiently to express their anxiety for His favour, not only came themselves, but brought their children to HIM, "that HE might touch them." They saw how the sick were healed by His mere touch, and they could not but hope that "virtue might go out of HIM," to the good of their children in some way, though they knew not how. But the disciples, we observe, "rebuked" those that brought their children. They thought it was quite beneath their MASTER'S dignity to be attending to little children: they, no doubt, considered it to be a mere superstitious feeling which made the parents bring them to HIM; and, besides, they did not like to have their grave discussion interrupted, which seemed to them of so much greater importance than the touching or blessing of children. (Just as in these modern times, the Church's salutary rules are so often disregarded, and the solemn Baptism of children is thought of less consequence than sermons, and is thrust to the end of the service.) Our BLESSED LORD, however, did not sanction the conduct of His disciples; so far from rebuking those who brought the children, HE was much displeased, or (as we say) *hurt*, at those who did so; and said to them, "Suffer the children to come to me, and do not forbid (or prevent) them; for of such is the Kingdom of GOD. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of GOD as a little child, he shall by no means enter therein. And when HE had taken them," one by one, "into His arms, HE put His hands on them, and blessed them" each separately. I say then, from this very remarkable passage of the sacred history, we are taught, among other things, that our Gracious MASTER regards with approbation any attempts, made in faith and humility, to bring the young ones of His flock to the privileges and knowledge of His Gospel.

HE wishes children to be brought to him even from their earliest infancy. As they grow older, HE would have them taught to "worship the GOD of their fathers," not as fulfilling a questionable or irksome obligation, but "with a perfect heart and with a willing mind." And HE would have us all, of all ages, young and old, parents and children, pastors and flocks, teachers and scholars, ever live under the sense of His Presence; always remembering the account we must at last give before His tribunal.

Remembering, I say, that "the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: that if we seek HIM, HE will be found of us; but if we forsake HIM, HE will cast us off for ever."

But now, this is not the solemn, serious point of view in which modern Christians are too often content to view subjects of this kind. They are too much disposed to laugh at all forms and ceremonies, however ancient, or even sacred, as if they were a kind of relics of mere heathen or, at least, popish superstition. But persons ought to consider, that many things may be right and good, and even of essential consequence to us, of which, nevertheless, it is beyond our faculties to give any account or explanation.

"How can these things be?" was the question of a doubting, unsubdued spirit.

"LORD, I believe! Help thou mine unbelief," was the artless language of faith, gratitude, humility, and love.

If in solemn Baptism and Laying on of hands ALMIGHTY GOD is pleased to convey and seal to us blessings, spiritual and eternal, are we, therefore, to reject His mercies because we cannot understand the mode in which they are imparted to us? Surely no, the humble mind will answer; rather let us be like Abraham, the Father of the faithful, who, when he was called of GOD to go away from his home and kindred, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went. Just so, the humble and lowly Christian, when he is called on by the voice of GOD's ancient Church to forsake this evil world, will be willing to follow whithersoever his heavenly Guide shall lead; to lay hold on such means of grace as are placed within his reach, however mysterious, and (in the world's opinion) however contemptible they may be.

Unquestionably, the true Christian would always wish to go quietly on, if possible, in his appointed station, yielding obedience to those in authority over him, whether in matters of Church or State. This is most manifestly the *sort* of conduct spoken of with approbation by the HOLY JESUS and His Apostles. Yet it is exactly the sort of conduct which, by the men of this world, is most scorned and detested. And especially the ancient

rules of the Church in which we and our forefathers were professedly brought up, rules which no one can prove to be contrary to the Scriptures, these are treated just in that way I mentioned, with scorn and detestation.

Now then, let this be considered, *if there were* any thing wrong, or doubtful, in any ancient ordinance of the Church, what would a humble person do? Would he not try to make the best of it? Would he not try to understand it, if possible, in some true and favourable sense? would he not be slow of speaking disrespectfully of it, or of leading others to scorn and neglect it? It is plain that a really humble person would not endure to act otherwise than thus. Yet in the matter of Confirmation, or laying on of hands, this is certainly too often not the way in which the rules of the ancient Church in England are received, but rather, in this as in other respects, like her great LORD and MASTER, she is "mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on." Thus, very frequently, whenever Confirmation, or Laying on of hands, is spoken of, or recommended, some sneer, or objection, is ready against it at once. As, for instance, in one of the scornful tracts published on this subject, by persons professing superior religion, there is this question asked: "What is Confirmation according to the doctrine of the Church of England?" To which this answer is returned: "It is an act whereby the accountability is removed from the godfathers and godmothers, on whom it had hitherto rested, and is placed on the child, who, before this wondrous ceremony is performed, is presumed to be not accountable for his conduct." Now, I need not say, that it is no doctrine of the Church of England at all that children are not accountable for their conduct till after they have been confirmed; there is no such thing said, or implied, in the Confirmation Service, or any where in the Prayer Book.

Again, it is said to be a piece of false doctrine, both in the Baptism Service and also in the Confirmation Service, that Christians are said to have been regenerated and born again in Baptism, *i. e.* in infant baptism.

Now, about this great subject most sad disputes have prevailed, and do prevail, and probably will to the end. But this, perhaps, is partly owing to good people's not attending to the exact meaning of important words. Thus, as to Regeneration,

some understand it to mean the seal of God's adoption *only*; others include a state also of heart and life suitable to such a privilege. Possibly this, or at least some equivalent expression, may seem to be used in both these senses in the Scriptures¹: any how, in God's Word, and in the early Fathers, Baptism with water, and Regeneration, I do not mean the word, but the meaning, are certainly most frequently put together. Why then is the Church of England to be condemned so hastily for doing what she is authorized to do by Holy Scripture and by the early Fathers, its best interpreters?

Again, it is said, people who are confirmed are no better than those who are not. To this it may be answered, If you were to go to Calcutta, or Madras, or Bombay, or any town in the East Indies, there you will see heathens and Christians living together, and the Christians no better than the heathens, or even perhaps worse, yet surely that does not prove Christianity to be false or useless.

Again, it is said, the Confirmation-day is too often made a mere day of idleness and dissipation. To this I reply, God forbid that it should be so; but this is not the fault of the Church. The Christians at Corinth (St. Paul says) behaved shamefully at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but does that prove that the Table of the Lord was justly contemptible?

Again, it is said, that in Confirmation, people must take upon themselves more than they will ever perform: as great fault is found with the Baptism Service, because one of the questions to the Godfathers is, "Wilt thou keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" and the answer is, "I will;" a promise which, it is scornfully said, no human being can possibly perform. To this I reply, that the words "I will," mean "I wish," I desire to do so; of course, with God's aid. And it could easily be proved that this is the meaning of the expression, from various places both in the Bible² and in old books. But if not, it would make little difference; for if a person profess Christianity at all, he makes profession of much more than he will ever perform; yet, surely, if he is in earnest, he will try to do his best.

¹ Compare *inter al.* Col. iii. 9, 10. Eph. iv. 22—25. Rom. viii. 14.

² See St. Matt. xx. 32; xxvii. 17. St. Mark xiv. 7. St. John vii. 17, &c.

And to mention one thing more, those who condemn Confirmation will sometimes speak, as if they thought it was a late invention of the Church of England, or, if not, an old popish superstition. What! are men, professing to be so wise, ignorant that Confirmation was ever practised in the Church from the Apostles' time downwards, and for hundreds of years before popery was heard of? Are they also ignorant, that what are called the Reformed Churches on the Continent, those, I mean, of Martin Luther and John Calvin, always have professed to observe it? Even on their own principles, then, how can it be modern? how can it be popish?

Thus we are compelled to defend ourselves when we are so sharply assaulted. But there are worse enemies yet, not spoken of. Alas! it is too true, ourselves, too many of us, even those of us who are not insensible to the great privilege of being members of CHRIST'S Church, how little do we value this privilege! and this misleads the young and the ignorant, and they think Gospel holiness to be somewhat of far less strictness, purity, and lowliness of mind than it is! And thus too often we are greater enemies to the Church, whereof we profess ourselves members, even than its outside foes.

Nevertheless, we should not despond, but endeavour to walk with increasing penitence, more humbly, dutifully, and sincerely, with our GOD, knowing how rapidly we are moving on to His presence, and of how little consequence and concern are all these earthly matters which now seem so great, but which, in reality, and to a dying person, are of no value whatever. Whereas, in regard of Religion, its truth, and its duties, we well know that its importance cannot be estimated, felt, or acknowledged, in any proportion to its infinite, overwhelming greatness.

In conclusion, then, let me offer to your thoughts a few plain observations on the whole subject, with special reference to the times in which our lot is cast.

After the administration of public Baptism, the Church directs her Ministers to give a solemn charge to those who charitably bring the infant to be christened, that is, made a Christian; of which charge the following words are a part: "You are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed

by him, so soon as he can say the Creed, the LORD'S Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar," that is, the English, "tongue" (because the Roman Church would suffer them to be repeated only in Latin); and then the charge goes on, "You are to take care that this child be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose," that is, for instruction before Confirmation. Then comes the Catechism itself, the title of which is thus explained: "A Catechism; that is to say, An instruction to be learned of every person before he is brought to be confirmed by the Bishop." Herein is contained a brief and masterly summary of the elementary truths of the Gospel. And at the end of the Catechism, among other rules and directions, there is the following: "So soon as children are come to a competent age, and can say, in their mother tongue, the Creed, the LORD'S Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer to the other questions of this short Catechism, they shall be brought to the Bishop. And every one shall have a Godfather or Godmother, as a witness of their Confirmation."

Now, on considering these rules and directions of the Church to which we profess to belong, the following thoughts must naturally suggest themselves to a serious mind. Surely good men in former times must have had a much deeper conviction of the importance of Baptism and Confirmation than they have now in these latter times. How can persons venture to bring children to be baptized at the holy font, and receive a most solemn charge to take care that, as they grow up, they shall be instructed in their Christian duties, especially that they shall be taught the Catechism, and brought to the Bishop for Confirmation; how can persons, again and again, promise so solemnly they will do these things, and yet take no heed whatever about them? It seems almost a mockery for persons to be solemnly charged to bring the young Christians to Confirmation, when they themselves, the godfathers and godmothers, in many instances at least, never have been confirmed, nor ever mean to be. Indeed, it is difficult to say how any person can reconcile it to his conscience to answer for a child at the Font, who is not a sincere, however unworthy, member of the Catholic Church of CHRIST. And how a person can be that, who withdraws him-

self from the Communion of the faithful in the Body and Blood of CHRIST, verily and indeed taken and received by them in the LORD'S Supper; I say, how a person, so living practically in a state of excommunication from the Church, can venture to undertake, in behalf of others, what he neglects for himself, is, as I observed, most difficult to say. But then it is answered, that this does not at all imply the necessity of Confirmation; for that many persons have, and do come to the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper, who never have been confirmed, nor mean to be. It may be so, but this does not prove that it is right. Indeed, it is in direct opposition to a very plain rule of the Church, which is this: "There shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." And, what is much to be observed, in the case of grown-up persons being baptized, where one might have thought the solemnity of Baptism alone, under all its most moving circumstances, would have been sufficient; yet the ancient Church determines otherwise, as the following rule will prove: "It is expedient that every person thus baptized (i. e. of riper years, or grown up) should be confirmed by the Bishop, as soon after his baptism as conveniently may be, that so he may be admitted to the Holy Communion."

In this rubric or rule, how strongly does the Church express her sense of the vast importance of Confirmation; as the passage onward, as it were, and path of admission to the deeper mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven. And how anxious must all thoughtful and sincere persons be, that they may not be deluded by the vain mockeries and haughty self-righteousness of this evil world, to make light of ordinances which the HOLY SPIRIT hath blessed and sanctified from the beginning, and which doubtless will prove to be Means of grace and consolation to faithful souls to the end of time!

And now, let no one think that I have been endeavouring to exalt the ordinance of Confirmation too highly. I have quoted nothing from the ancient fathers and writers of the Church Catholic; I have merely called your attention to the very words of our own Church Prayer Book, which Church-people, at least, cannot refuse to attend to, unless they will give up all claim to

consistency, and contradict their own professions. And this kind of inconsistency is a thing greatly to be deplored at this day, especially because it prevails among persons, in many respects sincere and serious, as we need to be often reminded. For, indeed, it in a manner blights and withers all the energies of the evangelical life, it eats out the heart of true piety, and rather than be accused of "*bigotry*," we are content almost (in practice, at least) to renounce the privileges and hopes of the Gospel.

When, in former days, in the spirit of true devotion, the Jewish mothers brought their children to the HOLY JESUS, that HE might lay His hands on their heads and bless them, some who were present were greatly offended at this, which they at once condemned as a vain, idle, and useless superstition. But "the LORD seeth not as man seeth." What man pronounces to be weakness and folly, or even worse, the LORD JESUS CHRIST (to speak reverently) took even pains to show His approbation of. What man, in the confidence of carnal wisdom, or the excitement of animal feeling, pronounces to be mere superstition and formality; that, when practised by a heart filled with penitence, lowliness, and obedience, and a mere desire to do only what GOD commands, and to love only what HE promises; that, however meanly thought of in this miserable world, HE, the great ALMIGHTY FATHER, will, we doubt not, pour down His choicest blessings on. To seek GOD in the way of His ordinances, and not in ways of our own choosing, must always be the safest course. To do this can never be dangerous; to do other than this, can never be safe.

The fact is, we are in no sense judges of what is best for us; no, not the wisest of the sons of men. We are like little children, never safe but when we have hold of the hand of our merciful heavenly Parent: HE alone can guide us; HE alone can support us. I say, we are no judges of what is good or evil for us, except so far as HE is pleased to reveal to us. Often it happens, that what we think of small importance, turns out to be of great consequence; whilst what we treat as somewhat very serious is found, in the end, to be but trifling. This is

the case even in the transitory matters of this world; and we have reason to think it will be found still more so in that ever-enduring state for which we are now on our trial. And the practical conclusion is, that every thing belonging to Religion ought to be treated with awe and seriousness, even if we cannot see the reason and meaning of it; nothing sacred ought to be made light of, whether it be what we quite approve of, or no. We may be mistaken of course, as all persons are liable to be mistaken, still we may pray and labour to keep up a humble, reverential frame of mind, far from all scorn and mockery, and then we may hope that our compassionate SAVIOUR will pity us, as HE did the little children formerly, and take us into the arms of His everlasting mercy.

Note.—It is very observable, that Eph. iv. 22—25, referred to at p. 279, may perhaps be thus more exactly translated: “That ye have put away, according to the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and that ye are renewed in the spirit of your mind, and have put on the new man, which after GOD hath been created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth one with another,” &c.

SERMON CCCXLIV.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION¹.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

“ My son, know thou the GOD of thy father, and serve HIM with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.

“ For the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.

“ If thou seek HIM, HE will be found of thee :

“ But if thou forsake HIM, HE will cast thee off for ever.”

IN these words we have beautifully exemplified to us the anxiety of a truly religious parent for his children's everlasting good. That they may “ know the GOD of their fathers,” know HIM, not with a mere barren intellectual perception, but so as to “ serve HIM,” and to serve HIM too, not indolently and reluctantly, as a harsh MASTER, but “ with a perfect heart and with a willing mind,” as a tender, compassionate, and all-bountiful FATHER, that his children may so live in the faith and fear of GOD, must, I say, be the anxious desire and prayer of every truly religious parent. For such an one cannot but remember the great account we shall all have to give at last, young and old, parents and children, to HIM “ who searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ;” nor can he forget the awful alternative placed before us all ; all, I say, equally, parents and children, young and old ; namely this, “ If thou seek HIM, HE will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake HIM, HE will cast thee off for ever.”

¹ Preached at a Charity-school Anniversary.

My object, then, on the present occasion, will be to lay before you, with the blessing of ALMIGHTY GOD, some few practical observations illustrative of the great truth impressed on us in this touching passage of Scripture; namely, *the great duty of leading young persons by all possible means to be serious and sincere in their religion.*

And first, let this be considered, and attentively considered: that without sincerity and seriousness, our religion can be of no value in the sight of the Omniscient GOD; of HIM who is described by HIMSELF as “searching all hearts, and understanding all the imaginations of the thoughts.” I say, without sincerity and seriousness we may preserve, indeed, the name of piety; there may be an outward attendance on good forms, there may be an indulgence of good inward feelings, still the heart cannot be right in the sight of GOD, there cannot be “pure religion and undefiled before our GOD and FATHER.”

It will not, I suppose, be denied or questioned by any person of observation, that the kind of disposition denoted and commended in the text, and implied in the expression, “serving GOD with a perfect heart and with a willing mind:” this sincere, serious, devout temper is by no means commonly to be found even in what is called the Christian world; and yet neither can its supreme, nay infinite, importance be made light of, without such presumptuousness and rashness as must be most offensive in the sight of ALMIGHTY GOD.

What, then, is so earnestly to be desired and laboured after is, that all persons, of all ages and stations—all who are capable of exercising the noble faculties of reason and reflection wherewith our CREATOR has endued us—should, above all things, strive to be *in earnest* in their religion; *i. e.* should live habitually under a sense of the Divine Presence, and of their own most awful responsibility—should remember that vast, unseen eternity which is before them; and how certainly, yea awfully, true it is, that our condition *in* that eternity will depend on the state of our hearts and the course of our conduct here.

These are the sort of considerations, plain and common-place perhaps, yet doubtless grand and affecting, by which we ought all to be led, under the guidance of GOD’s blessed Spirit, who is

ever ready to strengthen the weak, and to guide the wandering into habits of religious sincerity, and a deep, serious sense of the great changes which await us.

Especially, let me intreat you to call to mind of what vast importance it is in every point of view that young persons, even if it may be from their earliest childhood, should be taught this high and holy lesson,—“to know the God of their fathers, and to worship HIM with a perfect heart and with a willing mind;” in other words, should be sincere and serious in their religion, that is, in their whole conduct.

Now by “seriousness” let it not be supposed that we are to understand the putting on a grave, melancholy look on certain occasions, or the habit of praising oneself at other people’s expense, or of trusting to any supposed peculiar inward operations of the HOLY SPIRIT on the feelings, as if GOD were “a respecter of persons,” and favoured some of us more than others.

All this has a great deal to do with people’s fancies and imaginations, but with real seriousness of heart nothing at all. *This* is altogether of a practical nature. It does not depend on the state of a person’s feelings, but on his general course of life and behaviour.

And as it is much more easy to keep up religious feelings, or what are called so, than really religious practices, so, alas! is the outside show of seriousness much more often to be met with than the reality.

Owing to this, it seems to be that many rash, profligate persons will, without scruple, condemn all religious seriousness as mere falseness and hypocrisy, and other such names. And it must be confessed with sorrow, that there is too much occasion given for this charge, however false and uncharitable it be;—occasion is given, I say, by the vain, inconsistent conduct of too many, who, through an over-great confidence in themselves, will not listen to the “words of truth and soberness,” nor allow themselves to be mistaken in whatever notions they may have taken up about religion. And so what they think to be zeal for the truth is, in fact, nothing but zeal for their own opinions;

for every one likes to think that his own opinions are true and right.

But as few are willing to take so much trouble as to examine fairly the grounds and reasons *of* their opinions, this gives occasion (as I said) to people of a sharp, satirical turn to laugh at all religious seriousness as mere hypocrisy and outside show.

Hence it is become so very difficult, indeed almost impossible, to give people, and particularly young persons, true and just notions of the nature, meaning, and infinite importance of the Christian faith. The heavenly advice to us is now, as it always was, "MY SON! know thou the GOD of thy fathers, and serve HIM with a perfect heart and with a willing mind."

The advice is the same as ever, and the necessity of attending to it is as great, if not greater, than ever. And this because religion is come to be so much more than formerly a matter of talk and outside profession, though there does not appear to be any proportionate improvement in people's practice and course of life. How dangerous this is, and how much need there is for us to be on our guard against this kind of error, we see from that solemn warning of St. James:—"If any man among you seem to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion (says he) is vain."

These things being considered, we shall see how more than ever difficult it is to impress on people's minds proper notions about religious seriousness, what it really is, and how indispensably required of "all who profess and call themselves Christians."

With young persons especially it is of the last importance that the matter be set before them in its true colours; and in this respect it is that the true value of schools, especially of Sunday-schools, is to be seen.

For, later in life, when people have taken up their opinions and habits, they are too apt to hold to them, right or wrong. So that, generally speaking, I grieve to say it, it is of little or no use to give advice to grown-up people, I mean, in matters of religion.

This, indeed, cannot be thought of, without the deepest con-

cern, by any one who remembers, what is doubtless the truth, that we are all rapidly approaching the end of our probation,—the boundary-line of God's mercy.

I say, nothing can be matter of deeper concern to any considerate person, than to see middle-aged and elderly people going on evidently without any serious thought or anxiety about their duty as Christians; and yet this kind of conduct is every where to be met with, among all ranks and orders of people. On this account, it seems to be of such vast, such infinite importance, that young persons should, if possible, be well grounded in the truth of our most holy faith, and early taught to devote their lives to God in the practice of all that is right and good. For that is the true purpose of all Christian schools, not to make good scholars but good Christians.

But, alas! this is far more easy to advise than to accomplish. The Christian world is full of errors,—errors in faith, and errors in practice; and yet an outside show and profession of religion is kept up; and about this people are quarrelling and disputing, as if for the sake of something to do, or by way of amusement, and not at all as in a matter of life and death,—everlasting life, everlasting death.

My advice then to young persons would be, by all possible means, to keep out of disputes and questionings about religious matters, because there is no knowing where they will end. The thing required of them, and of all of us, is a devout and holy life, a life given up to the service of ALMIGHTY GOD, and to preparation for that last account, which we must make before the judgment-seat of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

To this purpose, it is so absolutely necessary, that we endeavour after a true knowledge of GOD, of our dependence on HIM, of the duty we owe HIM, and also what reasonable hopes we may have of His everlasting mercy.

Such is the advice in the text—“My son, *know* thou the God of thy father.” Great pains are often taken to give young persons human learning and scholarship; but this is the best and noblest instruction, to teach them to “know the GOD of their fathers,” to teach them to “love HIM, to put their whole trust in HIM, to pray to HIM, and to serve HIM truly all the days of their life.”

Perhaps it may be said, as it often is, that religion is too grave and serious a thing for children and young persons, and that it would be better to put off the thoughts of it till they are older and steadier. But perhaps, what people talk of 'growing older and steadier' is not correct: for it does not at all follow that because a person grows older, he shall therefore become steadier. Very often, quite the contrary takes place. As soon therefore as children are capable of knowing any thing, they should be taught to know the GOD of their fathers; they should be taught to raise their thoughts from this lower world, where GOD is known only by His works, to that blessed place where HE dwells in light, which no man can approach unto, adored and served by all His holy angels; they should be taught to consider what sin is—what it is to offend the great GOD, the GOD of the spirits of all flesh—to lie under His displeasure on whom we depend absolutely for every thing, for every breath we draw.

From this they should be led on to consider the infinite, the unfathomable love of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who, when we had lost all title to the favour of our CREATOR, came into the world, suffered and died for us, that we might be restored to the hope of everlasting mercy. Then they should be taught to consider that strict account which we must all at last give at GOD's tribunal, and consequently, how necessary it is for us to live ever under the guidance of that blessed SPIRIT, "from whom all holy desires, good counsels, and just works do proceed."

Thus should young persons be early instructed in their religious duty, and so taught to know the GOD of their fathers. They are going into a corrupted world, where indeed there are abundance of fair pretences and flattering professions, but which, if thoroughly examined and searched into, will be found to be such as no dependence can be placed on.

Nor should they be taught to think it enough merely to "*know* the GOD of their fathers," they must be warned also of the necessity which is laid on them, as on all Christians, to "*serve HIM* with a perfect heart and with a willing mind."

To "*serve GOD* with a perfect heart," is the sum and substance of all practical religion. It is required of all persons of all ages,

of young as well as of old. It is required, I say, that we should endeavour to have our heart and affections *perfect* towards GOD; that is, that we should love HIM more than any or all the things of this world; that we should be ever seeking what will please HIM, and avoiding what will grieve HIM; that we should live as in His constant presence, and be thoroughly resigned and satisfied with what HE orders for us. This is to serve GOD with a perfect heart. And it is plain, that any person who endeavours to lead such a sort of life as this, will be very strict with himself, very watchful and suspicious of his own faults and errors, and, as long as he lives, will be striving to grow better, according to the solemn admonition of our blessed SAVIOUR, "Be ye therefore," that is, strive to be, "perfect, even as your FATHER which is in heaven is perfect;" or like the holy Apostle, never "counting himself to be already perfect, yet pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS."

Thus must the Christian serve his GOD with a perfect heart, and also "with a willing mind." By this expression, of "serving GOD with a willing mind," seems to be meant that religion should be not only the business, but also the delight of our lives. It too often happens, that persons, when they are young, conceive a dislike, and even a disgust for religion, which lasts by them all their lives. This is owing to different causes: but too often (it is to be feared) to the mistaken strictness of well-meaning people, mistaken, I mean, in that they attend too much to outside appearances, and are too severe upon trifling errors.

It would be far better that children should be taught, even from their earliest years, to love their Heavenly FATHER, and to have pleasure in serving HIM; that they should be taught to look up to the LORD JESUS as to their best and only Friend, and to consider the time they spend in His service as the happiest of their lives. Thus they might learn to serve the GOD of their fathers, not only with a perfect heart, but also with a willing mind. They might learn that this world has nothing in it solid or satisfactory, and that Religion is the only thing that need be cared about or attended to.

For, if any man doubt this, let him only contemplate the great practical truth, on which, as on a foundation, the anxious parent

rests his inspired warning. "The LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." It seems that our present natural condition in this world is such, as to indispose us for a proper feeling and knowledge of spiritual truths. And yet these are *real* truths, as much as any others which can possibly engage our attention. Nothing can be more certain than that the LORD searcheth all hearts; but the sense we have of this truth is, alas! at the best but faint and weak.

It is irksome and unpleasant to us to consider ourselves as under a perpetual restraint, which nevertheless must be the case, if it be indeed true that our hearts are thoroughly searched and known by an all-righteous God. Hence it is so important that this truth should be in our early years impressed on our minds; that we should learn betimes to consider ourselves as under the eye of GOD, and that HE who will come to be our Judge is always close beside us, watching and noting down even the imaginations of the thoughts. For it is what highly deserves the consideration of all reasonable people, young as well as old, that if we would go on in the safe path, our thoughts and imaginations are to be watched over quite *as* strictly, if not even more so than our words and actions. That is, as we value our souls, we must *live* under a constant sense of GOD's presence with us, and of the account we shall have to give at last.

For "if thou seek HIM, HE will be found of thee; but if thou forsake HIM, HE will cast thee off for ever." The word here translated "seek" seems to mean searching diligently, or taking pains to look after any thing. And this seems to remind us of the great truth so energetically enforced in other parts of Scripture, and especially in the second chapter of the book of Proverbs, near the beginning, where we are distinctly taught that Divine knowledge is not granted to the careless, the indolent, and the prejudiced, but to those alone who zealously pray and labour for it. Nevertheless, if thou *so* seek HIM, HE will be found of thee.

Now let it be considered what is the value of such a promise as this to such as we are. Distracted as most people's minds are with the cares or amusements of this world, and even religion itself, or what is called religion, being so filled with disputes and differences, that the weak-hearted among us feel hardly able

to find the truth ; in such a state of things, it is matter of inexpressible consolation to remember that Religion is a matter between GOD and ourselves ; that no one can be in any case *forced* to do wrong or to offend ALMIGHTY GOD ; that whatever may be the state of the world in which we are, yet certainly, if *we* "love GOD, we shall be known of HIM ;" if we seek HIM in His own appointed ways, HE will be found of us.

What we should endeavour after, then, is this—(and I would particularly press it on the thoughts of those who, with charity of the noblest kind, interest themselves in the Christian instruction of children)—I say what we should endeavour after, is this :—In earnest to use ourselves to consider, and to teach children to consider and lay to heart, the great, plain, common-place Truths of the Gospel of our Saviour CHRIST,—what our condition is at present, and what it is likely to be hereafter and beyond the grave ; and especially the necessity, if we are Christians, of praying and striving to live more suitably to our profession than we have yet done. We should withdraw our thoughts from other people's conduct, and from things which are no concern of ours, particularly from schemes and plans for the future. We should keep a close watch on our words, particularly when we are provoked to be angry. Especially, we should guard against feelings of hatred or of envy, particularly envy, so common and so hateful a sin.

But as all this is easy enough to recommend, but very difficult to practise, (though it is no more than all Christians are bound to,) it is therefore absolutely necessary that we constantly set before ourselves, and before those for whose instruction we are answerable, the thoughts of what we are fast drawing to—death, judgment, and eternity ; and that for this purpose we use ourselves, without show or pretence, to a frequent reading or hearing of the Holy Bible, as the Church so plainly enjoins. Without this, it is really *impossible* (considering what a state the world is in) to keep on our minds at all a due and reasonable sense of our condition,—a condition, alas ! not of security and confidence, but rather of apprehension, doubt, and alarm, (must we not say ?) even to the best among us.

For, "if thou forsake HIM, HE will cast thee off for ever." To forsake ALMIGHTY GOD, is to leave HIM, to forget HIM, to

neglect HIM, to prefer other things before HIM. When the blessed JESUS was led forth to be crucified, all His disciples *forsook* HIM and fled. When His great Apostle St. Paul was suffering in his Master's cause, he was left alone by those to whom he looked for support and encouragement: "Demas (said he) hath *forsaken* me, because he loved this present world." In the same manner are Christians tempted to forsake their Heavenly FATHER, in that they are too ready to fly from their duty when trouble or danger appear, like Demas, too fond of this present world.

This then, I repeat it, is the solemn thought which never can be deeply enough impressed both on our own hearts, and on those of the children and young persons, for whose right and Christian education we are each in our several stations fearfully responsible. "If thou forsake HIM, HE will cast thee off for ever." That the great LORD of heaven and earth should threaten to cast us off, how moving, how awful is the thought! Because HE, our GOD and REDEEMER, must be, of necessity, our only hope and consolation—and if we lose HIM and His gracious favour, where else can we look?

Nor is it a mere fancy and superstitious notion that we are thus in danger of being cast off. For in proportion as we are tempted to forsake GOD and His righteous will, we must of course provoke HIM to forsake us and leave us to ourselves, or, in the words of the text, to "cast us off for ever." And in what degree we are tempted thus to forsake our God, out of fear of men, or too great a love of this world, or an over-great confidence in ourselves, in that degree are we in danger, in danger of being eternally cast off.

Now we should remember, that let our condition in life be what it may, be we young or old, rich or poor, sick or well, yet GOD is the only friend of us all. We cannot help each other but by His aid, nor can we help ourselves without HIM. This is true even of the affairs and interests of this world. But with regard to that world which is to come, it is yet more evident that all our dependence must be on HIM. For if at last we shall be found to have been neglectful of His gracious will, if we are placed on the left hand of the Judge when HE shall come with all His holy angels, what other hope remains? It is therefore better, infi-

nately better, to be the most miserable, abject wretch on the face of the earth, than to be such an one as ALMIGHTY GOD would cast off for ever. It is better to suffer readily any ridicule and contempt as long as we live here, than for the sake of avoiding this treatment to fall into sin, and be in the end rejected of our SAVIOUR and JUDGE.

“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation,”—you know the rest. There is no warning more necessary to be remembered by us all than this, particularly by young persons, who are so apt to be drawn aside by a sense of false shame, a fear of ridicule, which never *must* be yielded to.

Having eternity before us, and so short a time wherein to prepare for it, and even that uncertain, no time can safely be wasted upon trifles, in endeavours to please the world, or in plans and resolutions of amendment at some distant period, which very likely we may never live to see.

To be cast off for ever by ALMIGHTY GOD, to be shut out from the presence of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and from that happiness which HE has prepared for them that love HIM, these are dangers which may well awaken all our fears. But as to any thing we can suffer in this world, it is scarcely worth regarding by any one who remembers what our real circumstances are. And this makes it so necessary for us all, young and old, parents and children, teachers and taught, to *look to ourselves*, and not to be led away by the errors of other people, nor to waste our time and thoughts on trifles, or worse than trifles, when the question is, whether we shall be eternally rewarded or eternally cast off.

SERMON CCCXLV.

DANGER OF BAD COMPANY.

GEN. xxxiii. ult. xxxiv. 1.

“ And he erected there an altar, and called it EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL.

“ And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.”

THE contamination and injury which the Church of God should suffer from intercourse with the evil world is, we may suppose, typified and foretold in various parts of the history of the ancient Patriarchs.

The anxiety, too (so to speak), of ALMIGHTY GOD, to prevent this injury, is also shadowed out to us, as in other ways so, in the earnest desire uniformly expressed by the Patriarchs, and the care taken that their children should not marry into heathen families.

Thus, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, a very particular account is given of Abraham's anxious care that his son Isaac should “ not take a wife of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom he dwelt.” And again (at the end of this morning's lesson¹) we find Rebecca thus expressing her fears about her son :—“ I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth : if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me ?” And then it is immediately added, that “ Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.”

¹ The second Sunday in Lent.

Afterwards, when Jacob himself came to have a family of children growing up, one of his most severe afflictions arose from their not being contented to follow his quiet, religious ways, but choosing to mix more with the world (as we call it). For, after his escape from Laban first, and then from Esau, he began to think of spending his days with his family in comfort and prosperity, as is intimated in the end of the thirty-third chapter: "Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle. . . . Then he came to Shalem, and bought a parcel of a field for an hundred pieces of money, and there he spread his tent," that is, made that his home. Nor did he at all forget or neglect his duty to the LORD GOD of his fathers, who had "led him all his life long;" for it is immediately added, that "he erected there an altar, and called it (that is, dedicated it to the Name of) EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL,"—GOD, the GOD of Israel; or, The GOD of Israel is The GOD; thereby both bearing witness against the false worship and idolatry of the people among whom he dwelt, and, at the same time, providing (as it were) a Church, or centre of unity, for all his numerous family and dependents, in the regular service of JEHOVAH.

But, alas! the enticements of the world were too great, and prevailed to bring misery and sin into this otherwise happy home. And the beginning of it is expressed in the first verse of the chapter,—“Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.” And the sad consequences of her conduct are set forth in the rest of this chapter, which the Church at this season particularly presses on the serious thoughts of her members. For it seems, as I suggested, to be linked on to the morning lesson; and a direction is given to our thoughts, in that the last verse of that chapter and the first of this, contain the same form of expression, and appear to point out to us a peculiar kind of danger—the danger in which young persons are, in the midst of privileges, of being deluded and led away, first, by vain curiosity, and then by worldly and carnal lusts, to misery and ruin; and this through the influence especially of bad example.

Now when “Dinah went out to see” or visit “the daughters of the land,” we may well suppose that she was weary of the

quiet, uniform course of life kept up at her father's house, and wanted to see (as it is called) a little of the world.

Also, no doubt, the strict, religious services which Jacob (like his father before him) paid to the LORD JEHOVAH, the one true God, were matters of scorn and mockery to the neighbouring families; all of whom were, more or less, corrupted with heathen idolatry, and their gods served with (probably) impure and cruel rites.

Besides, then, the dislike of restraint, this unhappy young woman, no doubt, felt ashamed of being accounted one of such a family as Isaac's was; and, therefore, listened the more readily to the suggestions of the evil one. However, the end was most wretched, as the history goes on to state, and may well supply warnings to all Christian persons, young men and women particularly, in all times; but perhaps in these times especially, as may appear from a few plain considerations.

There is, we know, in "the natural man" a great dislike to submit to authority as such; so that, even when persons do what they are commanded, it is often not *because* it is commanded, but for some other reason.

And in times such as these of busy excitement, and in various ways perhaps of peculiar trial, the danger may be greater of our going wrong in this respect.

We may well suppose, that it was not with Jacob's permission that Dinah "went out to see the daughters of the land;" or, at least, that, if he did give her leave, it was with fear and reluctance, especially as she was his only daughter. But her father's authority and wishes being set aside, she went out without God's blessing, and misery and ruin followed.

And this represents to us the guilt and punishment which Christian people make themselves liable to when they disregard the authority of those whom the Providence of God has placed over them; when children go against their parents, servants against their masters, subjects against their Sovereign, and Christians of all stations against the Church, and those in it "who have the rule over us," as the Apostle expresses it. For the Scriptures uniformly set forth this authority as divine; and their language is,—“Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth

the ordinance of God." But the world cannot so much as endure this doctrine, and, therefore, so much pains are taken in various ways to throw a slight upon it. Nevertheless, it is founded on the word and will of God, and must stand sure, whatever attempts may be made by the power of evil to overthrow it and render it ineffective.

Again—and it is a consideration akin to that last mentioned—the tendency to cast contempt and ridicule on what is good, and especially on what is sacred, is what the world has always encouraged; and certainly now not less than formerly, as all persons of observation must be aware. No doubt (as I before suggested) when the Patriarch Jacob built an altar to the true God, the God of Israel, and thereon offered his regular daily sacrifices, he would thereby incur the scorn of the inhabitants of the land—the Canaanites.

And this especially, because the pure religion of the Patriarchs, solemn, simple, and unostentatious, was so different from that of the heathen, full of pomp and show, feasting and revelry,—generally, too, if not always, accompanied with cruelty and profligacy.

When therefore Dinah “went out to see the daughters of the land,” she, as a matter of course, heard her father’s religion, and all his service to *Jehovah*, ridiculed and scoffed at, whilst in the religious ceremonies of her new acquaintance there was so much to captivate the imagination, and indulge the passions. For when once persons can endure to ridicule and scorn that which is really good, it is but a small step further, and in a certain sense a judgment upon them, that they wander away into the paths of the unprincipled and hard-hearted.

It is observable, again, with regard to this melancholy history, that the family of the patriarch was, as it were, by itself, and though it were large, yet there was little or nothing of what is called ‘society’ among them. It might seem at first but a small matter, or rather worthy of praise than of blame, or at least no more than was natural, that Dinah should wish for more society. The wrong thing was, that she was so determined to have society, that she would seek it even among “the daughters of the land,”—the cruel, profligate heathens. And from their evil examples her principles became corrupted, till all ended in misery to her own family, and destruction to many unoffending people.

Herein, then, is contained much matter of warning, which the Church, like an anxious mother, desires to set before her children at this sacred season. And to some few particulars in which the warning presents itself to us, I now desire briefly to call the attention of thoughtful persons, young or old.

As the ancient patriarch had light as it were in the midst of darkness, and in the very centre of a land of heathens boldly "erected an altar, and consecrated it by the name of EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL,"—GOD, The GOD of Israel; so have we received, by tradition, from our forefathers, a precious inheritance, even the knowledge of HIM who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; we have had, in an especial manner, realized to ourselves the strong, emphatic words of the SON OF GOD HIMSELF, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see! For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Now, as the pure service of JEHOVAH was to Jacob's unhappy daughter dull, insipid, and wearisome; so most certainly is it rapidly becoming to be the case amongst us, that people, both old and young, are tired of Christianity. They would not, indeed, confess this to be the case, either to others, or to their own consciences; nevertheless, it doubtless is so. One or two signs of it I may just mention. People are very much afraid indeed of having too much religion: I mean, they are much more afraid of having too much, than of having too little. A person would think there must be some earnest cautions given in the Bible against over-much devotion, or over-much self-denial, or over-much bountifulness, as if our danger lay that way.

But we all know that there is nothing of the sort in Holy Scripture, or in the Church Prayer-Book, but that the whole tenour and stream (so to call it) of the teaching, both of the Bible and of the Church, is quite opposite to this; as, namely, thus: the world says, Be not religious over-much; the Bible and the Church say, "My duty towards GOD is to believe in HIM, to fear HIM, and to love HIM, with all my heart, soul, and strength." The world says, Do not deny yourself too much; the LORD JESUS CHRIST says, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The world

says, Be not too bountiful; the Scripture bids us think of "HIM, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

And so through all the creeds, confessions, prayers, and other services of the ancient Church, as might easily be shown, there is never implied any fear lest we should serve GOD too much, but rather a constant pervading fear lest we should serve HIM too little; or I should say, a confession that our best services are most poor and imperfect, and that we ought to be still endeavouring substantially to amend them.

Another among many signs of Christian people's weariness (so to call it) of Christianity, is this well-known fact, that people are so much afraid of having their children taught too much religion, and especially the religion of the Church. This is evident among all classes, as considerate persons must be aware; insomuch that among the rich, very often the knowledge of Latin and Greek is put above the study of Christian truth; and among poor people the chief thing considered, is very often not where a child shall be most likely to be best instructed in the great momentous truths of CHRIST'S Gospel, but where he shall learn to read, or write, or spell most accurately.

Now in these and other like cases there is a tacit confession, that, after all, the true knowledge of JESUS CHRIST is not "the one thing needful;" that Church principles, by which I mean the substantial principles of the Gospel, are at best but of second-rate consequence, and that in the present advanced state of science, and art, and knowledge of all kinds, Christianity, which stands still "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," must of course be left behind. Against this delusion of the great enemy, I consider that Christians of these days have the greatest need to be on their guard. And this the more, because it is a delusion which steals so gradually over the principles, as it were, and almost before he is aware, the man who thought himself a Christian finds himself in the darkness of scepticism and infidelity.

But it is, perhaps, in the way of warning to young persons more particularly, that the Church presses on our thoughts the sad history contained in this evening's first lesson. As for instance, they seem hereby to be put in mind what a happiness and

privilege they enjoy in the true service of the great ALMIGHTY GOD, EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL,—the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. They may remember that they were made GOD'S adopted sons and daughters in Holy Baptism ; that as they grew up, they have received, more or less, a knowledge of those great things which prophets, and kings, and righteous men of old could never attain to, and that they have perhaps, at last, in the solemn apostolic rite of confirmation received the seal of Church membership from the Church's chief minister.

True, indeed, they may have been greatly checked, blighted, and almost withered, by the chilling influence of the evil world around them ; even parents and friends, perhaps teaching them to slight Baptism, and even to scorn Confirmation ; and as to the Holy Communion of the BODY and BLOOD of CHRIST, in all ways, both by example and advice, rather dissuading than persuading them to seek the life-giving Privilege. As indeed it is the case, that grown-up people, and old people, very seldom like to see young persons more religious than themselves. We take it as a kind of reproach for our own neglects,—as well we may,—but it ought not to make us cast a stumbling-block in the way of others, who are disposed to serve GOD better than we have done.

But to return to what I was saying. Young persons will find as they leave their homes, and go out into the world, or mix in what is called ' society,' they will often find that what they had been taught to consider as right and good, a happy privilege, or a sacred duty, is accounted in the world as just of no value at all, or only a subject for jests and ridicule.

And it is wonderful to think how great the force of sarcasm and ridicule is, how rapidly it will undermine the principles, and so injure the heart as to render it almost incapable of really serious thought and reflection.

And there seem to be two reasons particularly why young persons, and indeed all of us, should be on our guard against this particular sort of evil. The one is, that there is often something very *taking* in the conversation of persons who thus deal in jokes and ridicule, so that persons will readily listen to them, who all the while do not approve of what they say.

And another consideration is, that profane language, or indecent, or such in which sacred things, and especially any part or ex-

pression of the Holy Bible, or of the Church Services, are made the subjects of ridicule and jest ; such things, I say, remain on the memory, and cause either greater sin, or bitter remorse, according as a person's conscience is hardened against, or open to, the influences of the Divine SPIRIT.

No society, then, is more to be avoided, than that of him, who (under any pretence) uses himself to turn sacred things into ridicule. I say, such society is to be avoided at once ; for that is a better mode of reproof, especially for young persons to resort to, than to offer a direct rebuke, which (except in certain circumstances) might only increase the evil it was meant to correct.

Again, let all young persons be warned by the sad history in this day's lesson, against an over-great anxiety to leave a quiet home, if they have the happiness to possess one, for the sake of getting out into company, as it is called. Pity, indeed, it is, that owing to causes, some of which are but too plain, quiet, domestic happiness is, alas ! but too rarely to be found among us. Want and distress very often, at home, and the increased temptation to fathers and husbands, to look for comfort, *not* within their own houses ; these things together combine to make young persons also, as they grow up, set but small value on quiet, domestic pleasures. And I suppose, I may say, that every year, more and more, the number of boys and girls who frequent beer-houses and other public-houses greatly increases. Indeed, it has lately been stated on good authority that in Manchester and other large towns, beer-shops or public-houses have been established within the last few years, *merely* for boys and girls. To such a pitch of misery and recklessness are we, as a nation, hastening ! if people would but believe it, before it is too late.

But still the duty of individual Christians remains the same. Young persons must still remember, that they are answerable each for their own conduct. If their elders have given them good advice, and set them a good example, then their own guilt will be so much the more heinous, if they go wrong. But if it should be otherwise, still they will not stand excused. The negligence or ill example of parents and friends will not stand *them* in the stead of a virtuous and holy life. Each of us, young or old, must give an account for our own works, for " the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad."

But now, perhaps, it may be said, that it is too much to expect of young persons that they should be serious and thoughtful, that youth is the time for happiness, and that cares and troubles will come fast enough, without hurrying them with these considerations. True it is, that too often middle-aged people, and old people, do talk in this kind of way, because (as I said before) they do not like to see younger persons more earnest than themselves in doing service to ALMIGHTY GOD. And because, too, the sight of a young person, going on in quiet unobtrusive ways of holiness, charity, and obedience, is felt as a reproach by those elder persons who look back on their own past years,—the best, perhaps, of their life,—spent in vanity and thoughtlessness, perhaps in vice and irreligion. Therefore such persons talk about youth being the time for what they call happiness, and that it is a pity to perplex it with grave, serious thoughts of GOD, Religion and Eternity. No doubt, the fathers and mothers of “the daughters of the land” talked in this way to Jacob’s daughter; and she, alas! was too ready to listen to such kind of instruction. But let all young persons consider that such talk as this is nothing but the language of the great enemy, put into the mouths of elder persons, and readily used by those whom he has already too much deluded.

There is no reason for supposing that the advice of old persons, merely as such, is to be implicitly relied on. Rather, we seem to be warned against any such confidence, as for instance, where Elihu says, in the book of Job (chap. xxxii.):

“ I said, Days should speak,
 And multitude of years should teach wisdom : . . .
 (But) Great men are not [always] wise,
 Neither do the aged [always] understand judgment.”

Therefore, though Christian young persons are bound in all ways to show respect to their elders, “to love, honour, and succour their parents, to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters;” still they must remember that their FATHER in Heaven has the first and original claim on them for love and obedience; and that it is (as the Apostle intimates) for the LORD’S sake, for the sake of their SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, that they must yield the service of duty and obedience even to their parents. Now this implies, that so far from its being out of the

question for young persons to be serious and considerate, it is entirely expected of them ; as much of them as of older persons. And as to the notion that a dutiful, regular, obedient course of life will make a young person dull and unhappy, and take away his natural cheerfulness and good spirits, what reason is there for saying, or thinking this? Rather, what misery and remorse are young persons often brought to, when, like Jacob's daughter, they have wandered out of the good and the right way, and found too late that the liberty and the gratifications which the world offered them, were all false, deceitful, and ruinous!

I may then mention two cautions particularly, which young persons had need bear in mind, when beginning to hold intercourse with what is called the world, in these times of great, and, perhaps, peculiar danger. First, and above all things, let them keep strongly impressed on their thoughts, that ALMIGHTY GOD does, indeed, love them ; that in Holy Baptism HE chose them for His own sons and daughters ; that in Confirmation, HE sent His special messenger and minister to assure them of His blessing ; and that this blessing was bestowed on them at that critical time of their lives, when oftentimes a choice is made which shall determine the Christian's condition even through eternity. I say, young persons should be careful how they get into ways of disliking the thoughts of GOD, of being weary of His presence, of behaving disrespectfully in the church, His holy House, of being ashamed of HIM and His service before wicked, or careless, or trifling people. For GOD will not be mocked ; HE will not allow us to take liberties with HIM, if I may use the expression ; if we venture so to do, and persist in it, we must expect, be we young or old, that HE will withdraw His countenance from us, and leave us to walk in our own ways. Many people, advanced in years, when they look back on their past lives, cannot but remember, with shame and remorse, in how many instances they have slighted and insulted their Heavenly FATHER ; and they would give worlds if they might but have the opportunity allowed them to serve GOD better than they have done. But this is impossible. How happy, then, ought young persons to consider themselves, in having it in their power to consecrate the prime of their days to HIM on whom we all depend ; happy, I say, if they did but know their happiness, and

make it their delight as well as their practice, while they heartily thank their Heavenly FATHER for having called them to a state of salvation, to pray unto HIM to give them His grace, that they may "continue in the same unto their lives' end."

The first caution, then, to young Christians is still to look on the Great ALMIGHTY GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, as their only true Father and Friend.

The second is this, that in the service of GOD they must not expect to find all plain and easy, but quite otherwise; the more earnestly and steadily they serve GOD, the more difficulties and trials must they expect to encounter. They must remember that as their SAVIOUR, immediately after His Baptism, was led up into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, so, immediately after Confirmation young Christians are led out (so to say) into the wilderness of this evil world, to be tempted, in various ways, by the same enemy of GOD and man. And let them not think that, because they see the generality of people, alas! careless and unconcerned, that therefore there is no danger. But rather let them look well to themselves betimes, and before their hearts become blinded and hardened by sin's deceitfulness. And then, if by the almost miraculous grace of GOD's good SPIRIT, they are conducted safe through so many perils, seen and unseen, they may have reason in the evening of their days, to bless the hand which so preserved them, and to look forward with hope to that day when HE who died for them on the bitter Cross, who took them for His own in Holy Baptism, and who watched over them with more than parental anxiety all through their difficulties and trials, shall receive them to HIMSELF, to that Home where all is happiness, security, and eternal peace.

SERMON CCCXLVI.

THE OLD PATHS, AND THE GOOD WAY.

JEREMIAH vi. 16.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

IN this startling warning, our attention is first caught by the first word “stand,” or stand still,—implying that people are going on in a headlong or careless manner, and that they had need pause and consider the truth of their condition. Opportunities for these pauses and seasons of reflection, the Church has carefully provided, if her sons would but avail themselves of them. Such for example, are the weeks of Lent before Easter, and of Advent before Christmas—the Ember Days at the four seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter; and in each week, the first and the fifth days, Sunday and Friday, besides the Vigils of certain Saints’ Days and other holy days, and the days themselves. All these occasions are warnings, as it were, to Christians in the midst of an evil world to “stand” and pause a little, and ascertain whether they are going on in all respects as Christians should; and if not, to lose no time in correcting whatever is amiss, while yet the HOLY SPIRIT grants them the power, which how soon HE may withdraw, no one can say.

“Stand in the ways,”—implying the notion of travellers coming to a place where many roads meet, and not being quite sure which is the right one. Now this seems to express, in a

good degree, the condition of all sincere Christians in every age ; but certainly in these times, the parable is of too clear application, whilst there is so much bustle and excitement going on, in matters not only of a worldly kind, but even of religion too. And the quietest persons, if they are in earnest, are obliged almost to stand still in the ways, and think where they are, and what they are coming to.

The Divine warning expresses this when it says, " Stand ye in the ways, and see," *i. e.* to the best of your power, view and consider the difficulties with which you are encompassed ; do not shut your eyes to them, and endeavour to soothe yourselves to rest with words of peace, peace, when there is no peace, but see and contemplate the dangers and difficulties which surround you as a baptized Christian in the midst of an evil world. And then " ask,"—But what are we to enquire and ask for ? Why, for the old paths—for that Way, Truth, and Life, which ever has been and ever will be alone " good"—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. People sometimes think or speak as if they thought that religious knowledge and religious practice may make progress in the same sort of way that arts and sciences do. But we should remember, that religion deals with individuals rather than with what are called masses of people, that every single person's eternal condition is of great price, and so considered and treated by ALMIGHTY GOD, that HE deals with us separately and tenderly, (so to say,) and not in that wide heartless *general* way, in which human schemes of improvement are carried on.

And possibly this may apply even to religious societies for missionary and other purposes : by *generalizing* so much, they deaden the feelings, and whilst we think what a great thing it is to have a hand in converting millions of heathens, we forget some poor miserable, not heathen, but worse than heathen out-cast, close by our own door.

I say this caution applies to all religious societies except the heavenly society—the Church ; for that reaches large numbers only through individuals ; it takes each child separately as it were in its arms in baptism, and commits each separately to the grave with solemn prayer. There is nothing meant to be done in the Church in a hurrying way, but all with tender regard to each lamb of the flock individually and separately. And I mention

this, as one among many special points of difference between the world and the ancient Church; the world goes on, but the Church stands still. What was the good way at first is the good way still. The old paths are the only ones safe to walk in.

But then, as the Divine warning says, we must "walk therein;" *i. e.* they must not be mere wishes and barren intentions and professions; there must be actual, steady, persevering conduct. As the Catechism taught us, "we must keep God's holy will and commandments, and *walk* in the same." These old paths, ancient primitive rules and principles, are not merely something to admire at a distance, nor again are they merely meant for those who have specially devoted themselves to religion, as Clergymen and others. No, as all need salvation and seek happiness, so there is but one way for its attainment, namely, the walking in the old paths, the following carefully and steadily the track marked out for us by Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs of old, and, above all, by the LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF. But now, too often, our answer is like that of God's people formerly, "We will not walk therein." And this may but too easily appear to thoughtful persons, from some few instances which I may mention.

The foundation principle of all true religion, considered as a matter of practice, seems certainly to be Communion with ALMIGHTY GOD, and entire resignation to His will. I call these but one principle; for as there can be no genuine resignation in the soul without the Divine aid and communion, so neither can this spiritual union remain, where the heart is not devoted to resignation and obedience.

This was "the old way" of the Primitive Church, of the Saints, Martyrs, and Apostles, who "looked upon, and whose hands handled, the Word of life." It was "the older way" still of "Moses and the Prophets," concerning whom the LORD JESUS HIMSELF pronounced, "If men hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." It was "the older way" still of him, whom the great LORD of men and Angels condescended to call "Abraham my friend." "The older way" again still, of him, who, when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and "it repented the LORD that

HE had created them," alone "found grace in the eyes of the LORD," and "walked with GOD." And it was "the older way" still of our first parents in their state of happy innocence, in the garden of Eden, before sin and death appeared; when they were with GOD because they were good; and good, yea, "very good," because they were with GOD. Their happiness was their duty, and their duty their happiness.

But, to say nothing of former times, we know, alas! too well, (if we consider these things,) both from observation and experience we know, that this is not the view which men like to take of their religious position and duty. Resigned obedience, founded on a sense of our entire dependence on, and communion with ALMIGHTY GOD—this temper is, of all others, that which is most opposed to the suggestions of the devil, the world, and the flesh. No wonder, therefore, that there is a constant struggle and warfare going on against them, within and without us. And hence it is, that in popular views of religion, or religious professions, whether true or false, the objections which are most commonly felt, are against what may be called the *best* parts of them, such, namely, as imply the necessity of resignation, obedience, and communion with GOD. For example, when we hear, as we sometimes do, people of loose and careless lives speak against Methodism and dissent, this is very often not out of any real reverence for truth and unity, but because they dislike every thing that has even the *appearance* of religious seriousness. And so on the other hand, when persons want words almost to express their scorn and abhorrence of the Church, this arises from a deep inbred dislike of submission and obedience, and a secret pride of heart, which cannot endure the doctrine that all our spiritual health, and even life, depends on our union and communion with our GOD and SAVIOUR in His appointed ways.

And other things might be mentioned, which tend to show how sadly disposed we are to refuse "the old paths," "the good way," of resigned obedience, and to say positively, as did our fathers formerly, "We will not walk therein."

Again, the doctrine of one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is to many persons' ears absolutely intolerable, and sounds of nothing but slavery, bigotry, and popery; and by many others

it is regarded as a sort of by-gone notion, which might be well enough formerly, but in the present advanced and advancing state of society (as the phrase is) had better be quietly dropped, especially as so many religiously disposed persons disapprove of it.

And yet, after all, it is most certainly the doctrine of the Church of England at this day, and has been that of the Church Universal in every age, from the Apostles' times downwards. I do not say that it is, or ever can be, a popular doctrine, considering the sad weakness and corruption of human nature : nor do I deny, that, if practically regarded, it may interfere with the customs and notions of (what is called) society, in this or any other age of the world. But this I say, that, whether pleasant or unpleasant, popular or unpopular, regarded or neglected, it is the doctrine of the Prayer Book now, and was the doctrine of Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs of old. In this instance particularly, when the devout Christian, in a world of discord, and amidst the strife of tongues, takes up the prayer of the Psalmist, " O let me hear thy loving-kindness betimes in the morning, for in Thee is my trust ; show Thou me the way that I should walk in ;" to this his prayer the answer seems to come, " Thus saith the LORD, See, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and thou shalt find rest for thy soul."

Now, in this case, it cannot be doubted what direction the old paths take,—they all tend towards Christian unity. No one can doubt that such is the tendency of the rules given by the Church of England, by the early fathers, and, above all, by our LORD JESUS CHRIST and His inspired Apostles. If the truth must be spoken, in this country at present the great enemies to unity are three : 1st, the powerful church of Rome ; 2ndly, the dissenters of all denominations (so called) ; 3rdly, the vast numbers of us who call ourselves Church people, but do not follow, nor try, nor mean to follow the plain rules of the Church. We have heard lately of some speaker at a public meeting, throwing a Prayer Book on the ground and stamping upon it. But is not the contempt and neglect shown for its rules by vast numbers of those who are called Church people almost as shocking ? do they not in practice trample on the Service Book ; I mean, by neglecting and setting at nought its rules and principles ? In proof

of which may be mentioned the well-known fact, that those who within the last few years have made a feeble attempt to recal people's thoughts to those rules and principles, have been treated with all possible disgrace, as setters forth of novelties, schismatics, papists, heretics, and children of Antichrist.

And yet, after all, what has been done? Merely a feeble attempt (as I said) has been made to induce Church people to look to the Church Prayer Book, to see how it harmonizes with the doctrines and rules of the Primitive Church; and to endeavour more and more to be such as sincere members of the Church ought to be. In one word, it was an attempt to persuade thoughtful persons to "stand in the ways, to see, and to ask for the old paths, where is the good way;" and then to "walk therein."

With regard, again, to the primitive doctrine of Baptism, surely it greatly concerns all sincere Christians in these times to consider whether it be not of far greater consequence than is generally supposed; whether, with regard to it, it be not particularly incumbent on us to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein."

It is well known that Baptism has long been accounted a matter of indifference, almost a mere matter of fancy or form, and having little or nothing to do with vital religion. Yet, certainly, the Church Prayer Book represents it very differently, as actually the instrument and seal of our regeneration, or new birth; the "means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

There can be no doubt that this is the doctrine of the Prayer Book, not in one or two places, but throughout. And, indeed, it is one of the chief grounds of objection brought by those who dislike the Book, that it teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Certainly, it does teach it most plainly and unequivocally; no person can doubt it. But if so, it surely must be a point of great importance to all serious minds. I say, it makes a serious difference when we come to look into the state of our souls, and on a sick and dying bed, to ask whether we have really been made God's children in baptism, or whether we are to look to some other mode or period of new birth. This, I say,

is a very solemn and touching inquiry, and ought always to be treated as such, and not with that levity and scorn in which, alas! it too often is met. And, especially, when appeal is made to "the old paths," to the rules and doctrines of the Primitive Church, founded on the teaching and practice of the blessed Apostles, persons ought to be cautious how they speak, act, or think lightly, lest, in too great deference to human judgment, either their own, or that of others, they depart from the good and safe way.

The same may be said of the primitive and apostolical ordinance of Confirmation, considered as a *sacramental*, i. e. not as a positive Sacrament, like holy Baptism and holy Communion, but in a manner uniting the two, as a supplement and completion, as it were, of Baptism, and introducing us to the highest mystery of the Gospel—the participation of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper.

But, alas! in the present degraded state of the Church Catholic, we too well know how this apostolic Laying on of hands is neglected and esteemed of no value—nay, scorned and despised,—and this even by multitudes, who call themselves Church people. But to those who are sincere and in earnest, we can only say in this, as in other like cases, trust not to the vain world, nor to the pride of your own reason, but "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein."

And, most of all, is this great principle of importance to be attended to, in respect of the most sacred of all ordinances—the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. For there is great danger of our pride and self-confidence interfering with this high Mystery, and not receiving it with simple faith, as the most precious gift of our GOD and SAVIOUR; both the means and the pledge of our union with HIM. But, alas! too often this most precious treasure has been injured, as I said, by the confidence of human pride.

The Church of Rome, presuming to explain what GOD has left mysterious, has, in fact, done away with the Sacrament, by the gross notion of Transubstantiation; to say nothing of her most unauthorized custom of refusing to give the Cup of Blessing to the great body of Christian people. For, whereas our Blessed SAVIOUR said, "Drink ye all of this;" the communicants

in the congregations of the Roman obedience (as it is called) are not permitted to drink of the consecrated Wine. This is bad; but perhaps it is worse what is too commonly the case among those who may be called Ultra-Protestants, that they esteem the Holy Sacrament of little or no value, not much better than a mere form; and, at the best, a bare memorial of the death of CHRIST. This wretched doctrine drives religious people to the church of Rome; just as the coarse doctrines and practices of many Romanists herein, drive light and simple people almost to infidelity.

The true doctrine doubtless is, that we cannot reverence this Holy Sacrament too highly, considering that therein, most certainly, the souls of the faithful are strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of CHRIST, by them verily and indeed taken and received in that most heavenly Feast. This unquestionably is the doctrine of the ancient Church; also of the Catechism and of the Prayer Book. We need not, then, scruple to say to any perplexed and doubting Christian—perplexed and doubting with regard to this, the most sacred of all holy Mysteries—“See, and ask for the old paths, there is the good way, walk therein, and thou shalt find rest for thy soul.”

Certainly, it must be allowed that there is much to distress and perplex the humble and meek-spirited soul on this, as on other important points, relative to Christian duties and privileges. Nevertheless, the perplexity rather arises from the sad decay of Christian piety amongst Christians in general, whether Protestants (as they are called) or of the Roman church.

If a person, to the best of his power, follows herein the old paths, not modern ones, he will not be far from the truth; and that for this reason, because he will follow the teaching of the Apostles, and of the first fathers and martyrs of the Catholic Church. And for that cause we place confidence in the teaching of the English Church, because we trust it is essentially in harmony with that of the Primitive Church, whatever may be said to the contrary.

There is, indeed, much to perplex and humble the sincere Christian in the present aspect and condition of the Christian world. But it is of no use to stand idly complaining, but rather we should consider well what fresh duties our still changing condition imposes on us. It is but idleness for people to say, “What

need of making alterations? what took our forefathers to Heaven, may surely take us there too." Alterations must and will be made, and our business is to receive them in a Christian way. And when people say, their forefathers were good enough, how do they know this? Has any one come back from the grave to tell us that all is going on well here? and that, if we live as others live, and die as others die, all will be well? Rather, it concerns us most deeply to look higher than any thing here; to consider, not what satisfied our forefathers, nor what satisfies people now-a-days, but what is the declared will of our LORD and SAVIOUR; what was the teaching of His Apostles, and the practice of His first saints and martyrs.

These are the old paths which alone are safe to walk in; the paths of love, and peace, and holiness; and the doing *our duty* in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us. This is the old way, the good way, and the safe way. This is the path which is indeed narrow and difficult; but it leads to life, and no other can be ventured on by any one who values the salvation of his immortal soul.

But alas! as the prophet warns us, so too often do we realize the warning; we say, in answer to all that can be said, one brief sentence, "We will not walk therein." We give no reasons; only, perhaps, a few passing excuses, to satisfy ourselves and others like us, just for the time. And so our precious life slips away from under us; and the precious opportunities which are given us of doing honour to God, and edifying the whole Church and Body of CHRIST,—these opportunities we let pass, and they return no more. As the prophet Isaiah says, "Our ears hear, indeed, a word close to us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, or when ye turn to the left;" but our answer, alas! is, too, too often, "We will not walk therein."

And this we make no account of. But the time will come when we must answer for it, and then all our excuses will avail us nothing; there being others like us, or our having so much business, or our being no scholars, or our thinking ourselves unworthy, or our not setting up to be better than our fathers, or our vague, unwarrantable trust in God's mercy, and our own feelings of confidence; all this will be swept away, and we shall

stand before the Judgment-seat, self-condemned, as those to whom the LORD OF MERCY addressed that most bitter reproof, “Ye *will not* come to ME, that ye might have life.”

For HE HIMSELF alone is “The Way,” even “The Good Way.” HE alone can enable us to “find rest for our souls.” If then we refuse to “come to” HIM in humility, penitence, and obedience, surely we cast off our only Hope.

SERMON CCCXLVII.

THE OLD PATHS, AND THE GOOD WAY¹.

JEREMIAH vi. 16.

“ Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

IN again directing our attention to this very remarkable passage of GOD'S Holy Word, we seem naturally to be led to inquire what comfort and encouragement, as well in kind as in degree, is here held out to those whose sincere desire it is to know and to follow the will of their heavenly FATHER. For we may understand the Divine message as put in the form of a question, as thus: Do you indeed seek rest or refreshment for your souls? spiritual rest, substantial refreshment? Then, “ stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.” And to this the answer of the hard-hearted people is, (as it were,) “ Certainly, we do seek rest for our souls, of course we do; nevertheless, we will not walk therein,” in the paths which you direct us to ask for; we do not trust your guidance.

The question, then, for ourselves seems to be, whether we are of the same mind and temper with those in former days, who thus unthankfully received the LORD'S merciful warning, or whether we do sincerely wish and endeavour to seek “ rest for

¹ Preached on the Sunday after a Confirmation.

our souls" in God's appointed ways of "the old paths" and in them only. Now, of course, in this, as in other cases, we should all be inclined to hope favourably of ourselves, to trust that we are not such as they of old time, who refused to walk in the good way which the LORD pointed out to them.

But still there may remain the question, what is this good way, and how may we know when we are in it? The LORD's answer by His Prophet is, "Ask for the old paths, and you will not miss of the good way; walk therein, and ye shall find rest." So that the inquiry comes to this, what *are* the old paths, in which the Christian may safely walk? And to this inquiry we will now, by God's help, endeavour to ascertain, however imperfectly, a true and plain answer.

And first and principally, we may call to mind, that the foundation principle of all true religious practice must of necessity be a sincere devoted love for ALMIGHTY GOD, implying faith in His power, and hope in His mercy,—in one word, resignation.

This was "the old way" in which the saints of GOD walked, who, in the early morning of the world, received the testimony of God's gracious favour; they all "walked with GOD." Thus to mention only the three illustrious patriarchs, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Of Enoch we read², "Enoch walked with GOD: and he was not; for GOD took him:" he did not die like the rest. "By faith" (says the Apostle to the Hebrews) he "was translated," (that is, taken away from this world to another,) so as not to "see death." "By faith," *i. e.* on account of his faith, his trust, his entire resignation and obedience to the Divine Will. "For before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased GOD." And this explains the meaning of "walking with GOD," pleasing HIM by an obedient, resigned course of life and conduct.

Accordingly, of righteous Noah, the second father of mankind, it is said thus, "It repented the LORD that HE had made man on the earth, and it grieved HIM at His heart. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." And why? Because he was "a just man" and one that "walked with GOD,"—the very same expression which had been before used of Enoch. And as in

² Gen. v. 24.

Enoch's case, so in Noah's, this "walking with God" was exemplified, and the meaning of it shown, in entire trust and resigned obedience. When all the rest "knew not," had no consideration, "till the flood came, and took them all away," the faithful Noah, "moved with fear," (it is said,) "prepared an ark to the saving of his house," himself and his family.

Here we see that faith produced fear, and both together came forth (so to say) in resigned obedience. Faith without fear would have been presumptuousness; fear without faith, desperation: but both together in the heart of that holy patriarch wrought that temper of confiding resignation, which, above all other, God blesses and loves.

In like manner, of the great prince and patriarch Abraham, all persons who are acquainted with the Bible history must be aware, how constantly he is spoken of, as one whom ALMIGHTY GOD particularly favoured and honoured. And the reason is always represented, because, like Enoch and Noah, he "walked with God," he yielded to him the service of a perfect heart, being wholly obedient and resigned, obedient in acting, and resigned in suffering. Thus, by obedient resignation, as the Apostle declares, "Abraham *believed* God, and God counted it to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God."

Many other instances might be added out of the Old and New Testaments; but these may serve to prove beyond all doubt that the temper of resigned obedience, which in Holy Scripture is often called in one word "Faith," is the foundation principle of all true holiness, all acceptable service. "Without faith," without this temper of obedient resignation, "it is impossible to please God." "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved," is the prime doctrine of the Church, from the Apostles' time to this day.

If any person, then, "ask for the old paths, where is the good way," the safe way, the narrow way, the first question of all is, Have you the mind and temper of those holy men of old, who were willing to do any thing which God should command them, and to suffer any thing which God would lay upon them? in one word, have you a resigned faith? If this be not your mind,—at least, if it be not your constant prayer and endeavour that it

should be your mind,—then what is the value of all your religion? then you are far indeed from the old paths.

We are too apt to begin as it were at the wrong end, in forming our estimate of the spiritual condition of ourselves or others. We look to external observances or internal feelings, and judge by them, whilst at the same time, perhaps, we forget the first foundation, and do not examine whether it was ever laid at all.

How can we sufficiently have impressed on our hearts and recollections our LORD's most solemn and startling parable, relating to this matter; startling, I say, to the oldest, the wisest, the holiest amongst us? "He that heareth my sayings, and doeth them not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

It is then in vain to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way," expecting to find rest, unless we sincerely and in earnest seek after the temper of faith, of obedient resignation; unless we strive to be like those saints and servants of GOD in former times, who not in profession only, but actually, and in their hearts and lives, resigned themselves to His service, and His dealings with them; who would rather do any thing, and suffer any thing, however against their own will, than vex or displease their heavenly FATHER, SAVIOUR, and GUIDE.

This was the sort of temper or disposition of mind with which the beloved disciple stood at the foot of his SAVIOUR's Cross, when all the rest forsook HIM and fled. This was the mind which was in St. Paul when he rested in the thought, that though "all men forsook him, yet the LORD stood by him and strengthened him, and would deliver him from every evil work."

Such, also, (to speak with reverence,) was the temper and disposition of mind which the ever-blessed SON of GOD sought to cherish in all who should call themselves by His great name, when HE said, "Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of ME; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Ye shall find rest for your souls;" His very words by His ancient prophet, when he warned His chosen people to see and ask for the old paths, and walk therein. If,

therefore, we would indeed walk in the good way of the old paths, we must first, and before all things, be meek and lowly in heart, after the pattern of the LAMB OF GOD, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We may then build on this foundation of faith, penitence, resignation and love, and then we may be sure we shall not eventually fall. Then we may begin to think of our Church privileges, what a blessing they are, how greatly to be prized, how tenderly to be cherished. We may think what a blessing it is to be born in a Christian land; that we are not heathens, Mahometans, or Jews; that we have heard of that Name in which alone is salvation; I say, that we have even heard of the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is a blessing and privilege far greater than thousands and millions of people possess at this day.

We may think, further, what a happiness it is to live in a country where we are *in any degree* permitted to serve GOD aright. For we may pray, and fast, and give thanks, and cry for pardon, and love GOD and one another, yea, more than this, we may even attend on the external service of our GOD and SAVIOUR, at least in some degree, without being troubled or persecuted. Of course, the world without and within us will always be against true holiness; but still at present, I suppose, there is no fear of our losing life or liberty, for the most careful obedience to the rules of the Gospel.

No one will or can prevent us from asking for the old paths, where is the good way, no, nor from walking therein. At least, no hindrance will be offered till people's prejudices begin to be offended; and this must be borne with patience, like other trials, remembering our blessed LORD's own solemn word of caution and encouragement too: "Whosoever *will* come after ME, let him daily deny himself, daily take up his cross; so alone can he follow ME."

However, with ourselves at present the case is so, that it is in our power to "see and ask for the old paths, and to walk in them." And I wish we would all remember what a great privilege and blessing this is. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF appointed Baptism as the means and pledge of admission into His spiritual society—the Catholic Church. Of that Baptism we

have been made partakers, the most of us, in our infancy; and if we have not valued and prized it at all as we ought, now then, for God's sake, let us return to a better mind.

Again, some of us,—alas! must I not say, but a small proportion?—have had their Baptism completed (as it were) in the apostolical ordinance of Confirmation. With regard to this, the Divine admonition in the text, at least the first part of it, may well be remembered, “Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.” But as to the latter part, whether we will “walk therein, and so find rest to our souls,” depends on the life we lead after Confirmation. For Confirmation is no modern invention, no temporary rule, it is as old as the Gospel itself; and as the Gospel is truly honoured, so will Confirmation be.

To all persons, then, who either have been confirmed formerly, or who have this last week been made partakers of this holy privilege, or, I might add, who seriously intend, and hope to be so hereafter, I now desire to offer a few plain but solemn considerations, in the way of comfort and encouragement. For if you do, indeed, as the LORD HIMSELF admonished His chosen people, “ask for the old paths, where is the good way,” with a full resolution to “walk therein,” as thus alone expecting to “find rest for your souls;”—if this be your mind and will, then, as faithful members of the Church in England, you may know, for your comfort, that you shall not be disappointed of your hope. I say, as *faithful* members of the Church, for to a partial inconsistent profession of “attachment,” as the modern phrase is, the like blessing cannot be supposed to be promised.

It is, then, a comfort and encouragement to know that the faith which we profess, and which is taught to us in the Catechism, and throughout the Prayer Book, but especially in the three famous Creeds, that this is no modern invention, but is handed down and dated even from that great day of Pentecost, when the HOLY SPIRIT came down on the Apostles of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. When we repeat these ancient Creeds, we do, indeed, in profession at least, follow “the old paths, and the good way.” And that was one reason, among others, why Christians formerly looked to the east in saying their Creed, as

looking to the morning, the sun-rising, the first-beginning of that glorious Gospel which "called men out of darkness into God's marvellous light."

It is also a comfort and encouragement to think that, amid many disadvantages, we have the high privilege of belonging to a Communion which is essentially episcopal, i. e. governed by persons deriving their spiritual authority, in unbroken succession, from the Apostles. And though such multitudes of persons deny or question this our claim, some with indignation, some with scorn and ridicule, yet it stands equally firm and true for all that, and will stand so to the end; being built on that, of which the Apostle hath declared, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST."

It is also a comfort and encouragement to us to know for certain, that we receive the Holy Sacraments of the Gospel from those who have Spiritual Authority to administer them. This is no vain consolation; it is founded in truth and reason, however the worldly or the thoughtless may laugh at and despise it. It was a rule strictly regarded by the Apostles and first members of the Christian Church, and though, in latter days, much neglected, yet no person can say that the neglect has not been productive of evil consequences, even here; and how it may affect men's condition hereafter, no person can venture to say. In this, as in other cases, the only safe method is to "see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein."

We may think, too, with thankfulness beyond expression, what a comfort and encouragement it is to have within our reach the blessed volume of Holy Scripture; knowing it, on the highest authority to be, indeed, the very written word of God. And since God's word, like His works, is full of deep mysteries, and requires, above all things, a meek, reverential, teachable spirit, we have the further comfort of knowing, that in doubtful and difficult places we need not trust to modern private interpretations, but to the voice of the ancient Church, speaking to us in the Prayer Book, and in the writings of the early fathers, saints, confessors, and martyrs.

As confirmed members, too, of the ancient Church, we have the further comfort and encouragement of being allowed, or rather commanded, to celebrate the various holy days, as they

come round weekly, or monthly, or yearly; and this we do as endeavouring to follow the old paths, and the good way of the primitive Church. Thus we are taught to regard the first day of every week as that of our LORD's glorious resurrection, and the sixth as that of His bitter suffering, and death upon the Cross. As the months come round, we commemorate "the Names of the twelve Apostles of the LAMB." And on certain days, returning every year, we commemorate some of the chief of those great and glorious events, which tended to the accomplishment of the mighty works of man's redemption by the SON of GOD, and sanctification by His SPIRIT. In all these things, as I before said, it is most certain, that the Church hearkens not after fancies and novelties, but "asks for the old paths, where is the good way, and walks therein."

But, alas! it is too true, that for various causes we, the ministers and professed members of the Church, do not follow, as we might, her wise and holy example of walking in the good way of the old paths. No doubt, the world has so strong a hold on people's affections, that they are glad to find excuses to escape from the strict rules and obligations of the Gospel. And then, unhappily, the corruptions of the powerful Church of Rome have been so great, that they supply a ready pretence to us when we wish to avoid primitive truths, rules, or practices.

And so, between the fascinations of the world on the one hand, and the prevalence of religious errors on the other, the CROSS of CHRIST is in reality slighted and forgotten; and this too, strange to say, under pretence of more than ordinary regard to It.

But we, Christian brethren, if we would be, indeed, sincere members of the Church and Body of CHRIST Crucified, we must look to the good way of the old paths, we must consider how the first Christians lived and died, and pray to be enabled to follow their example. We must not be carried away by vain fancies, of modern invention; we must not be scared and frightened from the path of truth and duty, because it is unpopular, or because it is called popish, or any other name of ridicule and reproach. We must be thankful, that as members of the English Church, we may be Catholics without being Romanists,

and Protestants without being dissenters; that we profess the Creeds of the Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs of the primitive Church; and that we have no need to be ashamed of our profession. We have no need to be ashamed of our profession, but we have need to be ashamed of our practice. We have need to be ashamed, that at the best we fall so far short of what we ought to be, and might be; and we have need to endeavour, for the time to come, to live more and more as becomes Christians and Church people. In short, we must look not to new modern paths, but to those "old" ones, where alone is "the good way;" the paths of lowliness, penitence, obedience, of daily mortification and self-denial, and taking up the Cross after HIM, whom we call our MASTER.

In particular we must not seek after a *comfortable* religion, but rather suspect and shrink from any thing of the kind. Not because there is not great and solid comfort in the true service of God, but because, in these latter days, there is so much danger of our soothing ourselves with false confidences and trusting to them. The only safe life for us, therefore, is a life of watchfulness, caution, self-warfare, and daily taking up the Cross. Any other course but this is most dangerous for us, as all thoughtful persons will confess.

In conclusion, I may just suggest to the thoughts of those who have lately sought the Church's solemn blessing, or rather, I should say, to the thoughts of us all, what comfort or encouragement it is,—and I may add, what matter of wonder too—that in this kingdom of Antichrist, this evil world, we are permitted, in some way or other, to pay regard to Sunday, the LORD's holy day.

The true Christian Sabbath-keeping, no doubt, is (as the Catechism explains the fourth Commandment) "to serve God truly all the days of our life." Nevertheless, Sunday, the weekly celebration of our glorious Easter, has, from the earliest days of the Church, been regarded with special honour, and is, in our present fallen, decayed condition, a precious relic, reminding us of that eternal Sabbath which still remaineth to the people of God. It is a day on which (almost) the evil world will let us alone, if we choose it. It is a day on which we may, in thought, at

least, "Stand still, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and pray, and hope to walk therein," in the toilsome, dangerous week which is coming on again; and so, for a time at least, "find rest and refreshment for our souls."

Sunday, then, to the sincere penitent Christian should be, not a day of darkness and gloominess, but a holy, happy, day. It should not be a day of excitement, of amusement, or curiosity, or running about from one 'place of worship' to another, or of indolent trifling, or gossiping; least of all, of seeking wild, disorderly company: but a day of happy, cheerful contentment, of peaceful looking forward to better things, of resolutions of amendment wherever we find ourselves deficient, of encouraging feelings of love, trust, and confiding resignation towards our FATHER, REDEEMER, and COMFORTER, and joining with His Church on earth in those praises and thanksgivings, which Angels and Martyrs, and the Spirits of the just delight to offer in their state of bliss.

"One day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." In God's sight we are as though we lived in the very times of the Apostles; as Christians lived then, so ought we to try and pray to live now. And we have many difficulties on every side of us, many enemies against us, though we see them not.

How cautiously, then, and "circumspectly ought we to walk," in these "evil days," (as the Apostle says,) how ought we to "work out our salvation (as he says again) with fear and trembling," lest after all that our merciful SAVIOUR has done, and still does for us, we should find, when it is too late, that we have "received His grace in vain," and thrown away these our precious lives, which, as conscience itself continually warns us, ought to have been devoted wholly to His glory and service.

TABLE

OF

DAYS, SEASONS, AND OCCASIONS,

FOR WHICH

THE FOREGOING SERMONS ARE MORE OR LESS SUITABLE.

** * * The numerals refer to the volumes, the figures to the pages.*

ADVENT—

Advent season, i. 19. 287; ii. 16;
iv. 269; vi. 286; vii. 277.
First Sunday, i. 9; ii. 249; vii. 270;
viii. 245.
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viii. 270.

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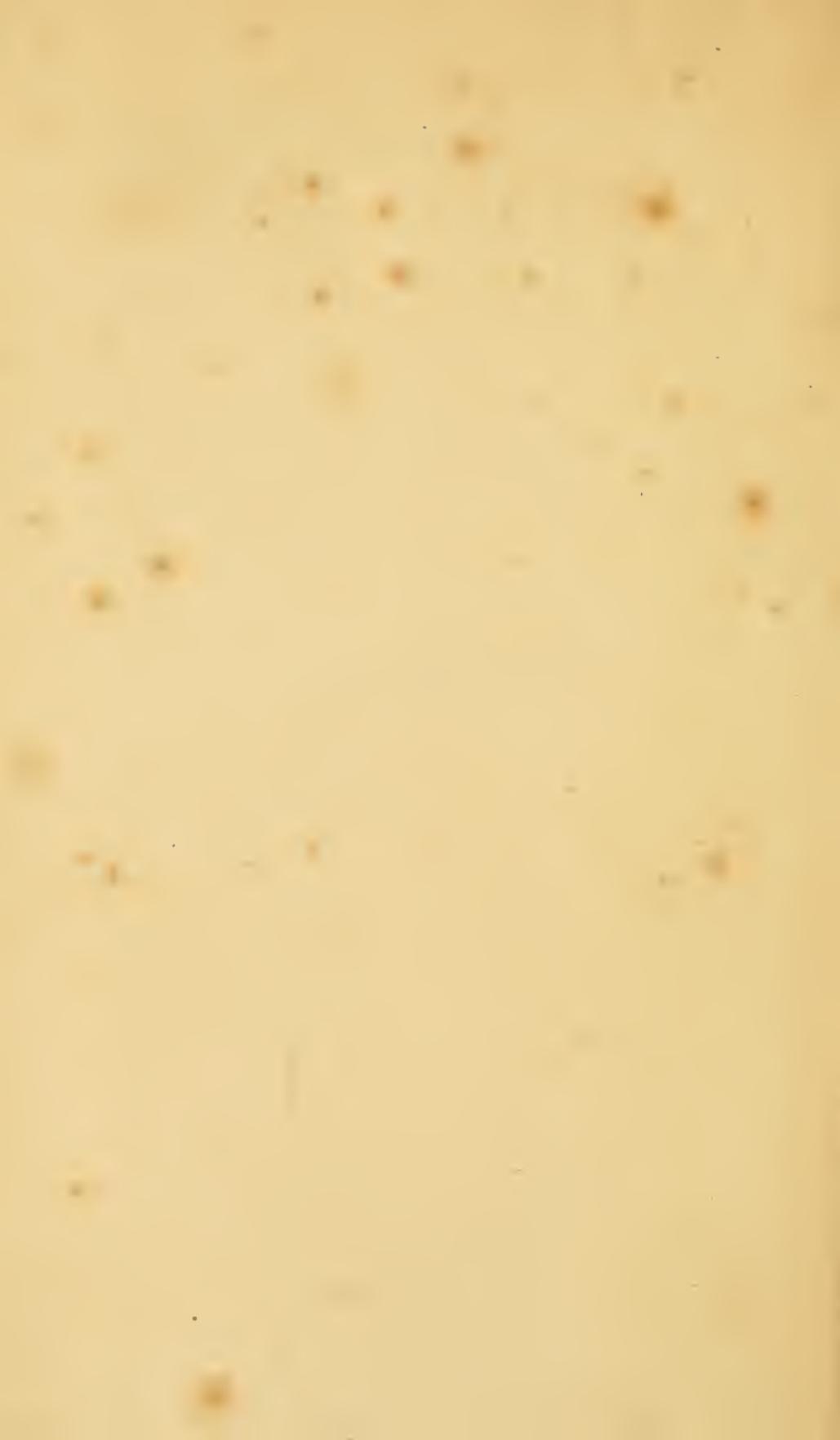
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