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RATIONAL GODLINESS.

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# RATIONAL GODLINESS.

AFTER THE MIND OF CHRIST,

AND THE WRITTEN VOICES OF HIS CHURCH.

BY

ROWLAND WILLIAMS, B.D.

FELLOW AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
AND PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AT LAMPETER.

The Letter killeth: but the Spirit giveth life.—*St Paul.*

But we have the Mind of Christ.—*Id.*

The Church is His Body; the fulfilment of Him that filleth all in all.—*Id.*

There can neither be true wisdom without religion, nor true religion without wisdom; but where wisdom is religious, and religion wise, there is Truth.—*Lactantius.*

The Law of the Spirit is what is written with no letters soever. . . . The Law of the Letter is whatever is written with letters.—*Luther.*

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TO THE  
MEMORY OF MY FATHER,  
**ROWLAND WILLIAMS, M.A.**

RECTOR OF YSCEIVIOG, AND CANON OF ST ASAPH.

WHO TAUGHT ME (HUMANLY) TO WRITE THESE SERMONS,  
AND BY WHOSE DESIRE SOME OF THEM WERE BEING PREACHED,  
WHEN BY HIS DEATH THEIR COURSE WAS INTERRUPTED,

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME,  
IN TOKEN OF REVERENTIAL AFFECTION,  
WISHING IT WERE WORTHIER OF HIM.

*Felix, non vitæ tantum spatio, sed etiam opportunitate mortis.*



“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every planting, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”—*St Matthew*, xv.

“Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?”—*St John*, iii.

“Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.....Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?.....Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?.....I think that I also have the Spirit of God.....I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say; the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?.....No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man.....By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.....Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.....Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part...we see through a glass by way of figure: but then face to face; now I know in part.....

If I pray in a (*strange?*) tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding remaineth unfruitful. What is it, then? I will pray with the spirit (*i. e.* with the deep breathing of affection?) and I will pray with the understanding also."—*St Paul, 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (passim et sparsim).*

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.....And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."—*St John's 1st Epistle.*

"Desire the pure milk of the understanding, that ye may grow thereby. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious; by coming to whom, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but elect of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ."—*St Peter's 1st Epistle.*

"Practical Christianity is a plain thing. The more distinct knowledge of those things, the study of which the Apostle calls *going on unto perfection*, may require very exact thought and careful consideration. And as it is owned, the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood, so, if it ever comes to be so without miraculous interposition, it must be by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made; by thoughtful men tracing on obscure hints, as it were dropt us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible that a book, which has been so long in possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered.....Reason can and it ought to judge not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and

the evidence of revelation.....There might be wise and good reasons that miraculous interpositions should be by *general laws*.....As it is manifest that Christianity is a scheme revealed but in part, and a scheme in which *means* are made use of to accomplish *ends*, so the credibility, that it may all along have been carried on by general laws, has been distinctly proved.....But we are greatly ignorant how far things are considered by the Author of nature under the single notion of means and ends; so as that it may be said, this is merely an end, and that merely means, in his regard.....There is no absurdity in supposing future punishment may follow wickedness of course, as we speak, or in the way of natural consequence, from God's original constitution of the world. It may follow in a way analogous to poverty, sickness, infamy, untimely death by diseases, death from the hands of civil justice .....Men should remember that when things come to pass according to the course of nature, this does not hinder them from being his doing, who is the God of nature; and that the Scripture ascribes those punishments to divine justice, which are known to be natural, and which must be called so..... In this darkness, or this light of nature, call it which you please, revelation comes in; confirms every doubting fear, which could enter into the heart of man, concerning the future, unprevented, consequences of wickedness; *supposes* the world to be in a state of ruin, a *supposition* which seems the very groundwork of Christianity, and *which, if it is not provable by reason, yet is in no wise contrary to it*.....*But it is not Christianity which has put us into this state.* Whoever will consider the manifold miseries, and the extreme wickedness of the world; that the best have great wrongnesses within themselves, which they complain of, and endeavour to amend; but that the generality grow more profligate and corrupt with age, &c. &c.; will think he has little reason to object against the Scripture account.....The Son of God 'loved us, and gave Himself for us,' with a love which He Himself compares to that of human friendship; though, in this case, all comparisons must fall infinitely short of the thing intended to be illustrated by them..... *How, and in what particular way,* the sacrifice of Christ had this

efficacy, there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain; but I do not find that the Scripture has explained it. We seem to be very much in the dark concerning the manner in which the ancients understood atonement to be made; *i. e.* pardon to be obtained by sacrifices.....Some have endeavoured to explain beyond what the Scripture has authorised.....In the daily course of natural Providence it is appointed that innocent people should suffer for the faults of the guilty. Men, by their follies, run themselves into extreme distress; into difficulties which would be fatal to them, were it not for the interposition of others. God commands by the law of nature, that we afford them this assistance, in many cases where we cannot do it without very great pains, and labour, and sufferings to ourselves. And we see in what variety of ways one person's sufferings contribute to the relief of another, and how this comes to pass from the constitution of nature.....What has been often alleged, even from the tendency of this method of our redemption, to vindicate the authority of God's laws, has never yet been answered, and is, I think, unanswerable, though I am far from thinking it an account of the whole case.....Not only the reason of the thing, but the whole analogy of nature, should teach us not to expect to have the like information concerning the divine conduct as concerning our own duty."—BUTLER'S *Analogy*, Part II. Chapters iv. and v. (*much abridged*).

“The general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God Himself. For that which all men have at all times learned, Nature herself must needs have taught; and God being the Author of Nature, her voice is but his instrument. By her from Him we receive whatsoever in such sort we learn.....The Apostle St Paul having speech concerning the heathen, saith of them, ‘They are a law unto themselves.’ His meaning is, that by the force of the light of Reason, wherewith God illuminateth every one which cometh into the world, men being enabled to know truth from falsehood, and good from evil, do thereby learn in many things what the will of God is; which will Himself not revealing by any extraordinary

means unto them, but they by natural discourse attaining the knowledge thereof, *seem the makers of those laws which indeed are His, and they but only the finders of them out.....*The rule of ghostly or immaterial natures, as spirits and angels, is their intuitive intellectual judgment concerning the amiable beauty and high goodness of that object, which with unspeakable joy and delight doth set them on work. The rule of voluntary agents on earth is the sentence that reason giveth concerning the goodness of those things which they are to do.....Notwithstanding, whatsoever such principle there is, it was at the first found out by discourse, and drawn out of the very bowels of heaven and earth.....Good doth follow unto all things by following the course of their nature; and on the contrary side, evil by not observing it.....But amongst creatures, only man's observation of the law of his nature is righteousness; only man's transgression sin. ...Take away the will, and all acts are equal.....

..... "Capable we are of God, both by understanding and will; by understanding, as He is that sovereign Truth which comprehendeth the rich treasures of all wisdom; by will, as He is that sea of Goodness, whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more.....We now love, in respect of benefit; we shall then love the thing that is good, for the goodness of beauty in itself. The soul being in this sort, as it is active, perfected by love of that infinite Good, shall also, as it is receptive, be perfected with those supernatural passions of joy, peace, and delight.....Man doth not rest satisfied with fruition of that wherewith his life is preserved...but doth manifestly pursue with great earnestness that which cannot stand him in any stead for vital use; that which exceedeth the reach of sense; yea, somewhat above capacity of reason, somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth; somewhat it seeketh, and what that is, it knoweth not; yet desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other desires give place.....When supernatural duties are exacted, natural are not rejected.....As St Paul's words concerning ancient Scripture presuppose the Gospel of Christ embraced; so our own words, when we extol the entire body of Scripture, must be understood with this caution, that the benefit of

nature's light be not thought excluded as unnecessary, because the necessity of a diviner light is magnified.....

..... "That which is of God, and may be evidently proved to be so, we deny not but it hath in his kind, *although unwritten*, yet the selfsame force and authority with the written laws of God.....

..... "Our belief in the Trinity, the coeternity of the Son of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the duty of baptising infants—are in Scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention; only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection.....

..... "The bounds of wisdom are large..... Wisdom endued the fathers who lived before the law with the knowledge of holy things. . . . Now, if wisdom did teach men by Scripture (only) every way of doing well, there is no art, but Scripture should teach it..... Whatsoever either men or angels know, is as a drop of that unemptiable fountain of wisdom, which wisdom hath diversely imparted her treasures unto the world. Some things she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of Nature; with some things she inspireth them from above by spiritual influence; in some things she leadeth and traineth them only by worldly experience and practice. We may not so in any one special kind admire her, that we disgrace her in any other; but let all her ways be according unto their place and degree adored..... That authority of men should prevail with men *against or above reason*, is no part of our belief. Companies of learned men, be they never so great and reverend, are to yield unto reason; the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the simplicity of the person that doth allege it, but being found to be sound and good, the bare authority of men to the contrary must of necessity give place.....

..... "Admit this—what would follow? God, in delivering Scripture to his Church, should have abrogated the law of nature, which is an infallible knowledge imprinted in the minds of all the children of men—Admit this, and what shall the Scripture be but a snare and a torment to weak consciences, filling them with infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despairs?



Not that the Scripture itself doth cause any such thing.....*Whosoever is spoken of God, or things appertaining to God, otherwise than as the truth is, though it seem an honour, it is an injury.* And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise *take great heed, lest, in attributing to Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.* I therefore leave it to themselves to consider whether they have in this point, or not, overshoot themselves."—HOOKER, *Eccl. Polity*, Books I. & II. (*extracted in fragments at intervals, and some redundancies, not affecting the sense, omitted*).

“The outcry with which ST JEROME had once been assailed was now renewed against ERASMUS. The annotations also by which he justified what were regarded as his innovations, were fresh causes of displeasure to many among the monkish theologians of the day. It was in vain for him to say that it was not his place, as an editor, to add to the Greek text which was before him; he was treated, as other critics have since been, as though it had been his duty to have invented evidence when he did not find it. He was attacked by Edward Lee, and also by Stunica. The ignorance and presumption of the former are such as might seem almost incredible. If Erasmus’s MSS. did not contain what Lee said *ought* to have been there, he should have condemned and rejected them as worthless! It was in vain for Erasmus to answer that the ‘omission’ of 1st St John, v. 7, was a case not of omission, but simply of *non-addition*..... The revision of the Latin version of Erasmus raised up against him yet more enemies. In his edition, 1519, he followed the phraseology of the early Latin Fathers, substituting ‘sermo’ for ‘verbum.’ This was deemed almost, if not quite, a heresy; and he had to defend himself, in consequence, against many attacks..... A bishop, whose name Erasmus suppresses, was preaching at ‘Paul’s Cross,’ when he went out of his way to attack the new translation. It was a shameful thing for those who had been so long doctors of divinity, to have to go to school again—for such to receive instruction from any mere

*Greeklings*. At length his zeal<sup>1</sup> waxed so warm (he said), that he called on the *Lord Mayor of London*, who was present, and on the citizens, for aid, that they would shew themselves men, and not suffer such *new translations, which subvert the authority of Holy Scripture*, to obtain further currency.....

..... "This critic (Bengel), like his predecessors, had to pass through misrepresentation on account of his work.....The Greek Testament, with the text revised in some measure, and with further corrections in the margin, was considered 'dangerous.' One of his opposers, Kohlfreif, publicly challenged him to a most uncritical measure; namely, to hush the enemies of criticism, by admitting that even the various lections were given by inspiration, in order to meet the necessities of various readers!.....

..... "Bengel felt that the attacks to which he was exposed were not made so much against himself personally, as against the genuine text of the New Testament; he thus bore the violent language with which he was assailed, with much equanimity, while he replied firmly and temperately to those who attacked him.....

..... "Lachmann's object was to give the Greek Testament in that form in which the most ancient documents have transmitted it.....His plan was in fact this—such evidence ought to lead to such results. Reviewers mis-stated his plan and purpose, and described his edition in such a manner as to shew that they<sup>2</sup> did not comprehend what he had intended, or what he had performed.....

..... "The great diligence which Mill displayed...exposed him to the attacks of many writers.....' Not only the clergy, but even

<sup>1</sup> If instead of zeal, or by the side of it, we have the desire of thriving in a fraudulent livelihood upon clamour, there is no limit to the cloud of misrepresentation which may be raised. But neither such things, nor thrusting into the very chamber of Death falsehoods brutal enough to wound, and artful enough to escape legal responsibility, can take away the duty, or the satisfaction, of buying the Truth, and selling it not. Such things, however, do show what chance their authors conceive themselves to have in the field of argument, as well as "what spirit they are of."

<sup>2</sup> Thus many speak as if Gesenius and Rosenmüller altered the Hebrew text more than Lowth and Kennicott; whereas just the reverse is the fact.

professors in the universities, who had no knowledge of criticism, considered his vast collection of various readings as a work of evil tendency, and inimical to the Christian religion.'.....The principal opponent was Whitby.....It is scarcely possible to conceive that he could have attempted to defend the common text, had he really been conscious how it originated. And yet some will always be found to listen and applaud, when writers like Whitby charge honest and reverential criticism with 'rendering the word of God uncertain,' and with being hostile to Christianity.....Whitby's accusation is a manifest proof how little he was capable of apprehending the subject on which he was writing.....

..... "The generation of Edward Lee and Daniel Whitby is yet flourishing among us. Many still sympathize with those feelings which aroused against Erasmus, on account of his meddling with sacred criticism, the indignation of a certain bishop, who wished the secular arm to hinder the boldness of biblical scholars. It was *then* deemed to be unbearable that *theologians* should have to learn from *grammarians* what the Word of God actually contains; *now*, however, both theologians and grammarians of *certain classes* are united in contemning and condemning those critical studies which they have never taken the pains rightly to understand for themselves. And thus it is that those who labour in the collation of MSS., or in seeking to render the results of such collation available for others, are misrepresented, not on the ground of what they have done, but because of what some choose to *say* that they have done or attempted. And such sweeping condemnations find their *admirers* amongst those who wish to 'take' what may be called a popular theological 'stand.' These things are not very encouraging to those who, with solemn and heartfelt reverence for God's Holy Word, desire to serve Him, and to serve his people, by using intelligent criticism in connexion with the text of the New Testament. Assailants often say much of the 'temerity' of critics, and they speak of 'sweeping' alterations on slight or insufficient grounds. This involves the question not simply of principles, but also of *facts*. It may sound not quite courteous to say of *such* opposers, *Don't believe them too readily*; but still those

important words express what has to be said, and that plainly. They *do* thus advance allegations *as facts*, which are *not* such; and by such *invented* premises, they draw conclusions of the most unfavourable kind.....The evil lies in this, not that opinions of a peculiar kind are held, but that *facts* are misrepresented—facts, which are the true basis of all argument.....This it is that requires that plain words should be spoken; for the uninformed are actually misled, though it may be to the instructed sufficient refutation of those allegations for them to be stated plainly.”—(The above extracts are fragmentarily abridged from Dr S. TREGELLES’s “*Account of the Printed Text of the New Testament*”—a work of the most sterling value for integrity and for learning, though containing <sup>1</sup> some things with which I can only wish myself able to agree.)

“One thing more there is to be added as an instance to the simplicity of religion; and that is, that we never deny our religion, or lie concerning our faith, nor tell our propositions and articles deceitfully, nor instruct novices or catechumens with fraud; but that when we teach them, we do it honestly, justly, and severely; not always to speak all, but never to speak otherwise than it is; nor to hide a truth from them whose souls are concerned in it that it be known. ‘*Neque enim id est celare, quicquid reticeas; sed cum, quod taceas, id ignorare emolumentum tui causâ velis eos quorum intersit id scire*’—so Cicero determines the case of prudence and simplicity. The discovery of pious frauds, and the disclaiming of

<sup>1</sup> Quotations may sometimes be only illustrations; and generally are not to be understood as claiming a wider agreement on the part of the author from whom they are taken than is expressed in the words adopted. As to some of the notes, it may be added, that while the latter part of this volume was being printed, I was removed by journeying, or by change of residence, from almost all means of reference to books. For candid readers this explanation, and for others none, will be sufficient. So, by appending the dates of the earlier Sermons, I shew some probability of their not being borrowed from a work first published at a later date: but I do not expect this will avail me with those who declare the “basis” of my views to be in a book which I never happen even now to have seen, and which report at least represents as of very opposite object and different methods.

false but profitable and rich propositions; the quitting honours fraudulently gotten and unjustly detained; the reducing every man to the perfect understanding of his own religion, so far as can concern his duty; the disallowing false miracles, legends, and fabulous stories, to cozen the people into awfulness, fear, and superstition; these are parts of Christian simplicity which do integrate this duty....

“For religion hath strengths enough of its own to support itself; it needs not a devil for its advocate; it is the breath of God; and as it is purer than the beams of the morning, so it is stronger than a tempest, or the combination of all the winds, though united by the prince that ruleth in the air.....And he that tells a lie for his religion, or goes about by fraud and imposture to gain proselytes<sup>1</sup>, *either dares not trust his cause, or dares not trust God.* True religion is open in its articles, honest in its prosecutions, just in its conduct, innocent when it is accused, ignorant of falsehood, sure in its truth, simple in its sayings, and (as Julius Capitolinus said of the emperor Verus) it is ‘*morum simplicium, et quæ adumbrare nihil possit.*’”—  
JEREMY TAYLOR, *Sermon on Christian Simplicity.*

“Many ways have been attempted to reconcile the differences of the Church in matters of religion, and all the counsels of man have yet proved ineffective; let us now try God’s method; let us betake ourselves to live holily, and then the Spirit of God will lead us into all truth.”—*Id.*, *Sermon preached to the University of Dublin.*

“God made man after his own image; that is, *secundum imaginem et ideam quam concepit ipse*; he made him by a new *idea* of his own.”—*Id.*, *Sermon XLX.*

“This labour is so far from being a curse, that without it our bread would not be so great a blessing.”—*Id.*, *Sermon XLV.*

“Was it not an infinite mercy that God should predestinate all mankind to salvation by Jesus Christ, when He had no other reason to move Him to it, but because man needed pity?”—*Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> The remarks of Archbishop Whately, in an Essay in the later editions of his Rhetoric, upon the temptation of religious teachers to support truth by false arguments, are not unworthy of consideration.

“Whenever any of you are tempted violently, or grow weary in your spirits, you may be cured, if you will please but to remember and rejoice that now you have something of your own to give to God; something that He will be pleased to accept; something that He hath given thee, that thou mayest give it to Him.”—*Ibid.*

“God will not fail in any thing that is necessary to them that honestly and heartily desire to obtain it; if very good men, that do all their duty to the getting of truth, perish, it is certain they cannot help it; and that is demonstration enough that they cannot perish, considering the justice and goodness of our Lord and Judge.”—*Id.*  
*Sermon XXXII.*

“God had mercy on all mankind before Christ’s manifestation... and they were saved, as we are..... We may publicly worship this mercy of God which is kept in secret, and be not too forward in sentencing all heathens, and prevaricating Jews, to the eternal pains of hell; but hope that they too have a portion in the divine mercy..... In the assemblies of *heretics* there are persons innocently and invincibly mistaken, and who mean nothing but truth, while in the simplicity of their heart they talk nothing but error.”—*Id.*,  
*Sermons XXXVII. and XXXVI.*

## COLLECTS.

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Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

God, who didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

O Lord, from whom all good things do come; Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*





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## SERMON XXIV.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER.

<i>After the way which (they) call heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers.—</i> ACTS xxiv. 14 . . . . .	377
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#### ERRATA.

Page 106	line 8	<i>for were read wear</i>
— 116	— 5	<i>the stop after likeness should be only a comma.</i>
— 277	— 11	<i>for in read an</i>
— 281	— 6	<i>there should be a bracket after Euclid.</i>
— 281	note	<i>read οὐχ, and Πλάτωνος</i>



## SERMON I.<sup>1</sup>

### THE RESTORATION OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

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*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.* Psalm civ. 24.

*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

*Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places.* Psalm cxxxv. 6.

Compare Psalm xcii. 5—6, and xciv. 8—10.

THAT there is such a thing as Evil in the world, and that evil men and spirits may tempt the unwary to their destruction, are truths which no sound Divine will venture to deny. Occasions will often arise, when it may be necessary to insist upon such topics, as inducements to that watchfulness and prayer, in which Christian Humility finds her armour.

Perhaps however a doubt may be suggested, whether the range of Evil is so extensive, and its operation so unmitigated, as on a superficial view we might be inclined to apprehend. In the mere physical world, it

<sup>1</sup> I print this sermon, preached by me formerly as a resident Fellow at Cambridge, to be a sort of introduction to the more recent ones. After about eight years interval, I find little to change but some formal expressions which I would not now write for the first time.

has long been acknowledged, that those stormy agencies, which seem fraught with malignity and ruin, serve purposes of wisdom and beneficence; observation having partly removed the errors of less favoured times, and a natural piety having taught men, not rashly to charge with folly those forces which are ministers<sup>1</sup> of the Most High, nor on account of our partial knowledge, to arraign the harmony of that stupendous whole, on which its Divine Author has stamped a law which shall not be broken. How far, then, may a very considerable analogy be traced in the moral world? There may appear to be a new element here introduced into our enquiry, by the volition of responsible agents; nor indeed must any sophistry ever induce us to evade the primary laws of conscience, or to deny the immutable distinction between right and wrong. Nevertheless, we are taught, that even the wicked is a sword in the hand of God; and, if not Hell and<sup>2</sup> Destruction, still less can we dissociate the heart of man from the Providence of Him, in whose book not only all our members are written, but who having implanted the sources of our volition, knows also our thoughts long before. It is in the highest degree probable, that a balance and mutual counteraction of human passions may have had a more important part allotted it as an instrument in the government of the world, than the tone most popular (and *possibly* most useful) in our general teaching would lead our hearers to infer. The nature indeed of man's motives before the Fall is a subject on which, in the

<sup>1</sup> See Pearson on Psalm civ. in Creed.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xv. and xvi.



absence of Scriptural data, we may forbear to reason; and we may fairly start with the assumption, that those virtues and graces which, being peculiar to Christianity, are the especial work of the Holy Ghost, would, if generally adopted, ensure the largest amount of human happiness. But herein seems to consist the wisdom of God; that, whereas we have made those things which should have been for our health an occasion of falling, his never-failing providence combines and balances the discord of things human, so as to work out on a scale of tremendous magnitude the harmony of things divine. Some men strain the language of the New Testament so as to require a literal extirpation of almost everything characteristic of our humanity. But the truth seems to be, that we should interpret Scripture with constant reference to the actual nature of those creatures of God, for whose use his Spirit intended it.

There is indeed no portion or capacity of our nature, which may not be rendered by proper use a moral instrument. Suppose we had to educate a child, who, having no sense of physical hunger, wanted the earliest (though if you please the lowest) inducement to obedience or exertion; who, having no germ of love, had no affection to be appealed to; who, insensible of fear, could neither be influenced by threats, nor provide against danger; who, incapable of anger, could neither resist aggression on itself, nor ward it off from others committed to its protection; who, untouched by resentment, could not appreciate those principles which enter into all retribution, as sanctioned by law human and divine. How in such a case could we evoke reason, or

how implant knowledge? Instead of that wonderful instrument, the human soul, on which the Divine fingers seem to play mysteriously as upon a harp, we should have to deal with a mere human log, with a biped so little raised above a vegetable, as to be less capable of education, than a horse or a dog. So true is it, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made—that hard by the springs of our meaner appetites a higher wisdom has implanted—if not the sources,—at least the means of awakening our noblest faculties—and that in reference to our inner mind, not less than to the outer world, we have placed before us good and evil, life and death. Is not every man's history full of instances, in which some want, or some emotion, some wrong or some disappointment, without or within—for it matters little—has helped to train him for the purposes of his existence? Only in each case it is necessary we should consider life a divine school, and look up to that great Teacher, who by secret and indiscernible ways brings good out of evil.

Nor are the principles which pervade the more tangled field of society, different in their kind, though often more difficult to be traced. Here also we find “twye-streaming founts,” the frequent conflict of diverse evils, and a general balance of good. Who will presume to say, his guidance could make that straight, which God has made crooked? Take away poverty out of the world;—where would be the exercise of charity? Heal all sickness and pain and aching of the heart;—where would be the discipline of those who in patience possess their souls? Remove all insult and grievance and

provocation; where would be the virtue of forbearance? Let all men understand each other's intentions, when really good;—where would be love hoping all things, or the same love bearing all things? Let the majority of men be meek and unresisting;—then what could check the lust of power, and stay the march of some victorious outlaw of nations, or quell the rapine of the domestic tyrant? Make all government just;—where would be the struggle of the patriot, and the grand drama of gradually self-evolving freedom? Concede all wholesome reforms as soon as desired;—what a field would be lost for patient forethought and active struggle; how many great epochs would be blotted out of the world's history; and how much sooner, for ought we know, the very attainment of perfection might pass on to decline?

I have ventured to throw together these reflexions, trusting that by His grace in whose sanctuary we are, they may help us to appreciate those critical periods, which from their connexion with the history of our Church are often forced upon our consideration.

In the lapse of about three centuries two great movements stand out emphatically in connexion with the spiritual and social state of Great Britain. The first was a religious Reformation, not unmixed with diverse political workings; the second a political convulsion, into which the element of religious disunion largely entered. The Church of England, by whose deliberate judgment I would endeavour to abide, has so fully adopted the first, that to persons gifted with a certain confusion of thought she appears to be its offspring; while she has so emphatically repudiated the

second, that, either from choice or persuasion, she has incorporated in her Prayer-book two services, one lamenting its great outrage, and the other exulting, as on this day<sup>1</sup>, in its general revocation. It is only natural for persons nurtured amidst the wholesome influences of the Church, and familiar with the deep piety of her services, to expect that the Reformation will appear, when examined, a work of pure faith and holiness; and they are distressed and embarrassed, when they find traces (often maliciously magnified) of human passion, now expressing itself in coarseness of language, and now breaking out into deeds of plunder or sedition. So a similar process of feeling leads persons of analogous character to conceive that the Civil War was altogether a great rebellion against all lawful power, and that hypoerisy, sacrilege, and regicide were its leading characteristics. These persons again, if they have the moral courage to compare calmly authorities, are startled by the amount of honest intention, unquestionable piety, and manliness proved in extremest trial, which seem to have existed in the ranks of the rebellious side. Shall we then desert the teaching of that religious community, which represents to us the Catholic Church of Christ, from whose hands we have eaten the bread of life, and drawn from her teaching our purest inspirations? Or on the other hand shall we lightly speak calumny over the graves of the dead? God forbid! But if it be in any degree true, that the play of human passion is practically an element in the divine govern-

<sup>1</sup> This Sermon was preached at St Mary's, Cambridge, on May 29, in, I think, 1847.

ment of the world, we shall easily find a clue to satisfy our own consciences, and to reconcile the tradition of our Church with the truth of secular history. We may approve in the main the great principle of the British reformers, that of purifying God's very truth from the corruptions which false tradition had thrown around it, without pretending to justify every Cyrus or Constantine, or all the sons of Zebedee who were agents in the work ; while again we may disapprove of the self-willed and rebellious spirit, which found its culminating point in the death of Charles the First, without denying that many upright and conscientious men were, partly from great provocation, partly from error and other human circumstances, arrayed in deadly contest against the Altar and the Throne.

Time and place will allow me only a rapid glance at some opinions affecting the Reformation. We are taught from our infancy to regard it as the great era, when the Scriptures were unsealed, when the poor had the Gospel preached to them, when the blasphemous abuse of indulgences was swept away, when marriage recovered its primitive sanctity, and the Christian sacraments their genuine meaning. How natural to look for almost superhuman wisdom and purity in the clergy and laymen who effected such a change ! Nor is such an anticipation altogether disappointed ; but how mortifying to find it in any degree exceed the reality ! Let others speak harshly of those too sensitive spirits upon whom arguments drawn from this topic have been urged, in some cases insidiously, and sometimes with too sad a result. But, did such persons entertain large views of

human nature, and its history; did they conceive aright of the Reformation as a great upheaving of the human mind against a yoke not imposed of God; as a passionate yearning of desire for that light of the Sun of righteousness, which after the partial eclipse of ages broke upon the world in its brightness, they would never wonder that a certain extravagance of zeal displayed itself even in the purest minds, and that their enthusiasm was caught or simulated by the baser natures which surrounded them. In truth, brethren, God gave us this treasure in earthen vessels. Yet who would reject the Apostles' doctrine, because St Peter denied his Lord, and St Thomas doubted, and St Paul persecuted him? If it should be necessary for some of us (as it is not necessary for every man) to study the language of the Reformers, and if we do so not in hostile extracts, but in their own fulness, we shall find, I admit, some things to regret, but far more to approve: and if we once catch their genuine spirit of undoubting trust in whatever God has revealed, and their extreme shrinking from any earthly commixture, we shall bring our third thoughts back to our first, and easily forgive the roughness of the shell, for the sake of this pearl of great price. Yet it does not follow, that the freedom of expression, natural in their times, is either necessary, or truly Evangelical, in our own.

So again, we have read the traces of the great Rebellion, in many a violated church, and many an outraged law: we still see its effects in that hereditary Puritanism, which now thwarts, and now calumniates the faithful children of the Church; we are taught on

one day to condemn as sacrilegious the death of Charles, and to-day to celebrate as a signal blessing the Restoration of his son. How are we to reconcile with such traces, and such observances, the fact, which every year fewer persons deny, that among the opponents of the King and his administration, were men learned, and acting (as they at least contended) upon constitutional law—honest, and prepared to sacrifice everything for their principles—pious, and believing that the work of God prospered in their hands? To this question, it is, I conceive, a sufficient answer to say, that scarcely in any great contest can such a line of demarcation be drawn, as to represent one party as possessing—the other as destitute of—all moral excellence. It may almost be doubted, if any cause, utterly bad, would stand for a moment. It is at least certain, we may discover some errors of policy on the Royal side in the Civil War, and some semblance of reason in arguments used by the Puritans, which, when contemplated from certain points of view, might easily create in the minds of the latter an impression, that they were doing God service. There are some features in their conduct which it is impossible not to admire, and some results of their struggle, for which posterity is still thankful. Perhaps, after all, it may by an ingenuous mind be considered a proof of the healing influences of Christianity, that a civil contest waged in its name was not altogether unmitigated by its temper. The Revolution which our fathers saw wrought by infidelity, among a people, probably of gentler nature, and certainly more polished than ourselves, was of a far more bloody and terrible

character. Contrast with the horrors of that national spasm, the many redeeming features of our Civil War, the frank loyalty of the cavalier, the stern soberness of the Puritan soldier, the courage of both on fairly fought fields, their firmness in disaster, and comparative moderation in victory—and say—if, after all, the very cruelties of religion are not better than the tender mercies of the wicked. There may be persons, (possibly here,) who think it dangerous to express even a qualified sympathy with men who assumed as a guide their own conscience, unchecked by authority. But at least, let me beg such persons to consider, for I speak as unto wise men, lest they carry their argument too far. For when the minister of Christ invites men to be religious, it is to their conscience that he must mainly appeal. If then we over vilify this great ally which our Master has provided for us in every man's breast, I no longer know what argument we shall use, to men who recognise only the authority of the world, or else no authority at all. But, perhaps, what we really mean by the word authority, is either grave *testimony*, or not much more.

Nevertheless, after all concession, as regards the motives of the better among the Puritans, we are bound to ascertain the main and characteristic principle, which divided them, as it were a chasm, from their opponents. Nor can we fail to discover a certain high-minded principle of *self-will*; which pretending to a peculiar illumination, and carried insensibly from step to step, was ultimately arrayed against institutions which we justly value in Church and State. Against such a principle, we need not fear to warn men; and, by this warning, we



in some measure affirm the value of what the Puritans assailed. We acknowledge our own allegiance to that hereditary Sovereign, who is to us something more than a chief Magistrate; whose possible infirmities we would not curiously scan, but to whom we would bow with affectionate loyalty. We testify also our attachment to that embodied representation of Christianity, which is, in a certain sense, the elect assembly of God; which, having been from the beginning, retains the pattern committed to her trust by the Apostles; the one vine with many branches, but according to her true idea, though ever imperfectly realised on earth, having only one branch in each nation; the witness of Holy Writ, and dispenser of the Sacraments, and so the peculiar Temple of the Holy Spirit; claiming the allegiance of all faithful men, upon this ground, that she is the mystical body of Christ, so that we cannot be her true members, without being also members of Him. It is in homage to such ideas, and in acknowledgement of that Divine Providence which rules both the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people, that we are met here to-day.

When we have fastened with firm grasp upon such great principles, we can better afford to be charitable. For it does not follow that our judgment upon historical questions and persons need be reduced to an iron uniformity. We may see clearly, on which side our principles would have ranged us, if the contest were to take place; but may with perfect consistency doubt, whether greater wisdom and calmness might not have averted it. We may even thank God, that by adversity our Church

learnt to value that *liberty of prophesying*, of which in all temptations she was ever after to afford so illustrious an example; while the State acquired that balance, which, if it once more needed adjustment, has yet tended in the main to secure our country peace amid the perplexity of nations, and security amid the crash of thrones.

All honour then to the really good on both sides. There may be expressions in the services of to-day, as on other like occasions, somewhat tinged with the feeling of the hour. How could it be otherwise—when men had seen fire cast into the sanctuary, and all the carved work broken down with axes and hammers? Who would not then have fretted himself because of the ungodly? Nevertheless, the deliberate mind of our Church may be gathered (in the silence of her proper organ), from the uniform moderation of her very soundest Divines, as well as from that Christian temper, which it is the tendency of her services to form. Let no man think, he either does her service, or enters into her inner spirit, by denying the uprightness of Hampden, or the massive intellect and enormous learning of Selden; by arrogating the divine judgment upon our greatest Poet, whose daring genius trod the very realms of Eternity, and saw, in trance almost approaching the prophetic, God and all the sanctities of heaven, about Him thick as stars; or by libelling a man scarcely inferior in his kind, Baxter, to whom she offered a bishopric, whose whole life was one of moderation, and whose works are even now one of our store-houses of practical theology; or by banning others, whom she has blessed, and whom I scarcely

know whether to call Puritans or Churchmen, such as Lightfoot and Poccocke, Reynolds and Manton, Wilkins and Whichcote. Of all these and many of their fellows, we may say, "Cum tales fuerint, utinam penitus nostri fuissent;" and yet our hearts may turn, with fonder and more enduring affection, to the firmness of Laud on the scaffold; to the gentleness of Hammond in prison; to the eloquent learning of Jeremy Taylor, a fugitive; to South, a schoolboy, praying for Royalty dethroned, or Hacket, still communing with God in a liturgy proscribed; to the profound discrimination of Ussher and Williams, both great names not lightly to be maligned, and one of them dying of a broken heart for the violent death of the Prince to whom he was falsely accused of lukewarmness; to that Fellow of King's, to whom excessive joy at the happy event of this day was not less fatal; to that Welsh gentleman, who thought it sufficient honour to lose his head in such noble company; and to that more than chivalrous gallantry, which triumphed over incalculable odds, and endured with constancy to the death, around the Royal standard of Montrose.

If any one thinks this a strange aggregation of names, let him please to consider, that our Faith looks forward to a world, where all misunderstandings will be cleared up, and all jealousies done away; and as there is no one of these persons, whose salvation he would venture to pronounce less probable than his own, it is a strange inconsistency to cover with obloquy on earth, those whom we hope, through the mercy of Jesus Christ, to meet in Heaven. Or, if he requires the sanction of authority to permit his heart to feel, let him hear the

noble language of not the least Teacher (among those whom I have mentioned) of things human and divine. "I have conversed with some men," says the Author of the *Holy Living*, "who rejoiced in the death or calamity of others, and accounted it as a judgment upon them for being on the other side, and against them in the contention: but within the revolution of a few months, the same man met with a more uneasy and unhandsome death; which when I saw, I wept, and was afraid; for I knew that it must be so with all men; for we also shall die, and end our quarrels and contentions by passing to a final sentence."

It will be clear to the attentive hearer of these remarks, that I have not represented our Church as recommending the sacrifice of any of her hereditary principles. If, indeed, it were not possible to hold fast what appears right, with kindly consideration of those whom God's good providence may have appointed either to awake us to Christian jealousy, or to warn us against some exaggeration of statement, I had rather then endure the loss of charity, than the wilful denial of Truth. But, surely, it is not unwise to hope that, as the world advances, we may learn to reconcile zeal and love; that we may gather from all history, by what mutual error and collision of men the purposes of God are partly retarded, and yet finally wrought out; and how important it is, not to charge our opponent with error which he disclaims, or even exaggerate that which he undoubtedly holds.

Who knows if, hereafter, the same good Providence, whose footsteps we have faintly traced, may bring about

a day, when, with a Church less gagged by the world, with hearts less embittered, in proportion as our minds are more fully cognizant of each other's meaning, we may unsay whatever was harshly said of old, and the triumphant song which justly goes up to God for having reared again our broken altars, and turned the captivity of our princes, may be no longer mingled with the sound of earthly discord; when our national Psalm may not be as in the strain of temporal Israel—"they are fallen, but we stand upright"—but rather humbly devout, as well as jubilant: "Not unto us, oh Lord, not unto us, but unto *thy name* give glory;" and again: "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

I have almost done; but my task has been speaking of the Dead. Would that we also who live, brethren, might not wait for the grave to close over this already perishing flesh, before we do some justice to each other's motives, make some attempt to understand the principles implied in each other's language, and some allowance for each other's inevitable errors; remembering, that in many things we all offend daily. Nor perhaps is there any better mode to obviate the evil of partial disagreement, than to co-operate heartily in those things where we do fully agree. Nor are such objects wanting, when all around us poverty is pining, ignorance is sinning, souls are perishing, and many men, not indifferent to Truth, are still exclaiming, Who will shew us any good?

But lastly, brethren, the fashion of this world passeth away. It remains to all men, whatever opinions they

may have chosen, to give an account before the judgment-seat of Christ, of the manner in which they have maintained them. Now there is no acceptance of persons with God. Forgive me, then, if in anything I have spoken wrongly, and join with me in a short prayer, as for ourselves, so for all Christian souls.     *Amen.*

ST MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE, *May* 29, 1847

## SERMON II.

### *DRAWING NIGH TO GOD.*

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*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

Epistle of St James, iv. 8.

IT might seem at first sight, as if the course of time, and the discoveries which are made in some things, were increasing the distance between God and man. For as the world grows older, it seems to be farther from its creation; and some are tempted to fancy it farther from the hands of its Creator. Nor is this all; but as men grow wiser in earthly things, they find out many natural causes for events which might once have been considered wonderfully strange. We know, how the simple poetry of a rude people is apt to describe their gods as sitting in the clouds on some high mountain, or as brandishing the thunderbolt in their hand, or even as descending bodily to mingle in the fray. But when people have explored all mountains, and discovered what clouds are made of, and found that the lightning obeys laws which are as regular as those of the sunbeam, only more difficult for us to trace, they find themselves obliged to put farther and farther back,

that great first Cause, which yet they wisely conclude must be somewhere, though unseen—and even if unknowingly worshipped, still ever to be worshipped by us as nothing less than the eternal God. Early in the last century the people of an English village entreated their clergyman (the father of the late Bishop Cleaver) to go to prayers, because the number of meteoric lights in the sky made them fancy the end of the world must be at hand. We are tempted to smile at such a fear. For it has been discovered, not by any merit of ours, that even those extraordinary things in nature, which appear most eccentric in their movements, have still an order, which (however fluctuating) still implies a law; even the course of comets can be to a great extent predicted; and although nothing can well seem to us more accidental than a change in the weather, we know that the rain of Cardiganshire is connected with currents of air half the distance of the world away; the climate of Scotland is softened by waves which have grown warm under the sun of Mexico; so that both from the innumerable links, and the astonishing extent of the scale of nature, there is nothing so small that it may not become great, if we view it in connexion with other things, and nothing apparently accidental, but the eye of knowledge can view it as falling within the realm of order.

Now such a view of the grandeur of the scale, and the steadiness of the operations, of nature, may serve to give us confidence, that things apparently evil will be overruled for some better purpose, either to ourselves, or to some other pensioners upon the bounty of Him, by whom the whole world is governed and preserved. It



may also help us to understand, why many of our prayers are not granted; for perhaps they could not be granted consistently with some parts of the widely-extended designs of God.

But if any one is seriously inclined to draw from thence any argument for forgetting the Lord our Maker, his pretended wisdom deserves pity, far more than the simplicity of those older generations, on whom he may bestow only a smile. By professing to be wise in such a fashion, he does indeed become a fool.

For, we may in all calmness ask, what possible reason can be given, for thus divorcing the world from Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being? No one, worth listening to, has even pretended, that the great mystery of life, or the beginning of creation, is easier to explain now than it was a thousand years ago. On the contrary, it is only more mysterious. The conditions (or circumstances) of life we understand better; but what life in itself is, we know less than ever. We have handled in all directions the casket which contains that awful secret; but the invisible jewel not the less escapes our grasp. It is as if God had said, Learn how life is to be cherished; its affections developed; its powers braced; but what that depth is, which I breathed into the nostrils of man, when I made him a living spirit, I have hidden behind the veil: thus far shall you come, and no farther. If indeed anything has been gained in the last few years, by the concurrent researches of men who understand both the body and the mind, it is a stronger conviction of there being in the human soul something, in no other way to be explained, but by referring it

either to the presence, or in some way to the mysterious power, of the only wise and invisible God.

What some men, however, profess to apprehend, is not so much our approaching the Creator in a sort of rivalry (like Prometheus)—for that is too absurd an audacity—but they rather speak, as if the Divine judgments had gone up out of our sight—as if the traces of the Divine handiwork were less legible in the world; or the signs less palpable of the presence of Him who is the same to-day, and yesterday, and for ever. But how can this possibly be so? Would any man, who had fancied a field to be sown at random, turn round and say there was no sower, because the more he looked, the more he discovered the seed to be arranged in the most beautiful order? Or, if we found, that what appeared at a distance a confused multitude of men, was really an army with all its tents, arranged by rule, *should we say* (or should we be mad if we said), “Now it is clear that these people have no general”? Surely it is manifest, that the more order you find in the world, the more manifestly you find a plan; and the more plan<sup>1</sup>, the more thought; and the more thought, the more necessity for falling down and worshipping Him, whose thoughts indeed are beyond our thoughts, but who thus gives us glimpses by things visible of his

<sup>1</sup> The real weight of some negative arguments on this point is, not properly against “final causes,” but against the hasty assumption that we understand their entire range. The Divine scheme may be not only large, but lavish and multiform, beyond our comprehension; hence it may be a natural error for us each to make our self, or our world, the centre as it were of the circle of God’s providence; yet it is not less true that He encompasses us all.

own invisible power and Godhead. The more causes (in short), I say, the more need of reverently acknowledging that great and good Being, by whom alone they are ordered and sustained.

Then, however, some persons profess to be lost in the vast periods of time which must have rolled silently along, since we can even imagine the world beginning to be. Thus they seem to be removed farther from the Creator, or his face melts, as it were, away into the clouds of the distant Past. Certainly, it is true, few persons would now represent our world as having been made for the first time so little as a few thousand years ago. But what difference does it make to the lightning, whether it has to travel a hundred miles or a thousand? It travels both alike in a second. But if there are things in nature, to which distance makes no difference, much less does it make any difference to mind. Our thoughts travel quicker even than the lightning, and take cognizance of the ends of the earth. For example, if any one has friends in India, he is able to call up their likenesses before his mind, and to fancy the scenes in which they mingle, and every employment they are engaged in, without moving from the spot where he stands, and without caring whether India is a thousand, or a hundred thousand miles away.

But still more and more, my brethren, again: if we could for one moment frame in our mind a true conception of that clear and eternal Spirit, to whom all our thoughts are perhaps hardly so much as the twilight is to the bright noonday, we should find all distance and time, and every thing that seems to separate man from

the eye of his Maker, fade away like the shadow of a cloud. We should then see our Maker and our Judge to be both a God afar off, and also a God at hand. We should be brought nigh to Him, without changing our place, by a sense of that power and that goodness, which are about our path and about our bed, and which watch over our going out and our coming in. We should then feel, that as no part of the round world is farther than another from the blue sky which is over all, so before the eye of God all hearts are alike open, and from Him no secrets are hid.

Now it is true, we never shall get a full and worthy conception of God, by merely thinking of him, as a matter of the understanding. We cannot by mere searching find him out. But happily, brethren, it is not necessary for us to travel such a road, in order to arrive at peace. We have only to speak to him at heart, as a child speaks to its father, and He himself draws nigh to us with his very present help. He makes our very life a school for us; and if we watch all its events, not superstitiously, as if they were quite beyond our control, but with a reasonable faith, considering them as things which we may partly mould, and partly be moulded by, we shall find him not a God that hides himself, but one that reveals himself to us day by day.

I mean to say, if there is anything in life which puzzles us, or even happens to us so as to be remarkable, we have only to apply to it this idea, of its being part of a scheme by which God is training us, and this faith will teach us to understand it. In thy light, said the devout Psalmist, we shall see light. We only

understand the world when we make God its beginning and its end. Our joy is holy when we consider God as leading us through cheerfulness to charity. Our sorrow too becomes blest, if we take it as a chastening from One who knows, that we needed either humility or resignation, and who fits us thereby for a better inheritance.

Again, our wealth, our talents, our knowledge, and all the strange differences which God leaves between his children in these things, are never so well accounted for, as when we remember our Saviour's lesson, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Or, if there are still riddles in the world's course, which no one has explained, how can these be better looked upon, than as parts of that groaning, wherewith (St Paul teaches us that) all Creation travaileth together, looking with earnest expectation, for the uncovering of some greater happiness of the children of God. Thus faith escapes from either the turmoil, or the downfall, of our earthly city, by looking forward to that city of God, which is eternal in the heavens.

Nor yet would I speak, brethren, as if the strength of our consolation lay only in the future. For who can unroll that sacred volume, in which the experiences of bygone members in the Church of God are recorded for our benefit, without seeing that in whatever time of need they drew nigh, they found him a very present God, even in time of trouble. When Jacob in his wandering prayed, before he laid himself down to sleep at Bethel, the place of his prayer became to him the house of God. When Solomon asked wisdom rather than wealth, and wisdom not for any selfish purpose, but

in order to serve his people, God gave him wisdom beyond all the princes of his time, and added abundantly beyond all he had asked or thought. Thus, of Samuel dedicating himself in the devout purity of childhood, of Josiah giving his heart early to the Lord, and of Daniel<sup>1</sup> when he remembered the God of his fathers even by the waters of Babylon, we find, that each had an abundant recompense,—though one perhaps after the manner of earth, and another in that of heaven; one an honoured life, and another a strange deliverance, and another a providential death; but which of the three was best, is clear only to Him, to whom not only things past, but also things possible, are known. But why should I linger upon meaner instances? We read of one above all others, who had indeed been rich in the wealth of heaven, but who for our sake had become poor: and though he was a son, yet he learned obedience and drew nigh to God through humility, through prayer, through a life of well-doing, through an offering up of himself in a death of pain. Is it not worthy of all remembering, that never in the days of our Lord's incarnation did his Heavenly Father so manifestly draw nigh to him, as when He, the only-begotten, had first drawn nigh by some act of submission as a servant, or of duty as a son. It is when he has stooped in Jordan to fulfil all the requirements of religious observance by being baptized, that the heavens are opened, and a voice is heard, saying, "This is my

<sup>1</sup> In using the illustration of Daniel, I did not mean to pledge myself to any critical opinion as to the date of the book, or as to questions depending on the date

beloved Son, hear ye him." It was while He was praying, and already anticipating the hour of his voluntary agony, that He was transfigured, and his face shone as the sun, and both the first founder and the greatest restorer of the old Jewish law appeared to do homage to him as their Lord. But still more, it is in his utter desertion, and the hour of his darkest solitude, that an angel appears to him from heaven strengthening him; and it is from that tree of shame, which He made the symbol of divine patience, that He both promised paradise, and received, in the darkness and the earthquake, and in the firstfruits of the resurrection, the testimony of nature to that majesty which did not shield him from suffering, but which left him mighty to save, as the Son of the living God.

In this ever-memorable history of Him who is our Saviour, our Master, and our example, we have, as it were, the crowning proof, that whoever would have God draw nigh to him in mercy, must in humble faith, and in sincerity of self-devotion, draw nigh to God.

It remains therefore for me to ask you, brethren, are you drawing nigh to God? Is He in all your thoughts? Are you trying to shape the week-days of your lives according to his will? Or, if any of you have never seriously thought of taking him as your master, how can you possibly expect to have him as your Saviour.

Let this be our first question, and the grand test, of whether we are drawing nigh to our God. When we offer that petition in our prayer, *Thy will be done*, do we mean at heart only an idle resignation of the course

of the world, and other such things as are utterly out of our power to change; or do we really and earnestly include our own thoughts and our own conduct? These are, to some extent, in our own power. If we pray for God's will to be done in these, He will assuredly grant that prayer. One petition, therefore, there is, we can always obtain; and that is the one, which of all others most concerns our happiness. But now, is every one here daily praying, Thy will, O Thou most holy and most true, be done by me, in my thoughts, in my feelings, in my deeds? If that is our sincere prayer, we are then drawing nigh to God, for we are offering the prayer of self-devotion. Doubt not, then, but earnestly believe, He will in mercy draw nigh to us.

But secondly, in all such prayers as the above, (that is, prayers which endeavour chiefly to change our sinful lives into the likeness of God, rather than change his holiness to consent to our sin), have we the most perfect sincerity of heart? This is a most vital point. For, if any man is double-minded in his prayers, asking salvation from sin, and desiring only safety from pain, let him not think to receive spiritual grace from God. He is so far from drawing nigh, that his heart is really afar off. Therefore God beholdeth him afar off. Nor can any man be considered truly sincere, who does not act as he prays. For this is the reason which St James gives, why our prayers do not prosper: "Ye ask, and have not, because ye ask amiss." And again: "A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways."

Thirdly, are we drawing nigh in *humility*? When the prophet Isaiah had conceived truly of the majesty



of God, he said, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." Thus to feel strongly that divine excellence must ever tend to humble our thoughts of ourselves as dust and ashes. Not that I mean this as if the most abject expressions of servile abasement were always the most pleasing in the ears of God. There is such a thing as a decent soberness, the twin-sister of true reverence. We should not like to see a favourite child, even when he deserved punishment, cringe like a beaten hound. But we know that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also, in a lower sense, but a true sense, our Father. His throne is a throne of grace. Therefore let us draw nigh, in all time of our need, with full assurance of faith. But yet, remembering what that All-holy Being is, who chargeth his angels with folly, and what we are, with all our giddiness, our vanity, and inconsideration, let us raise our conception of that which the Holy Spirit would have us to do; and thereby deepen our sense of how sadly we have fallen short of it. It will be both a natural consequence of such humility, and in turn a help to it, if we throw our minds into an attitude of deep reverence, whenever our thoughts approach the things which belong to God. Let his name, his worship, his consecrated house, and even all words and things associated with the affectionate experience of devout spirits, retain that power to awaken reverential thoughts in us, which they ever exercise upon uncorrupted minds. For thus, we shall have many little remembrances of our highest duty and our purest happiness, which the giddy neglect, and which the scoffer has for ever thrown away. If a man steps into a

church like into a market-place, or handles a prayer-book like a newspaper, or suffers the levity (which he mistakes for wit), "foolish jestings, which are not convenient," to play about consecrated words and things, he has at least begun to weaken the outward defences of the soul against sin; and he becomes in danger (as the wise man said) of perishing by little and little. Whereas, on the other hand, if we have that true reverence, which comes of humbling ourselves before God, he will in due time exalt us with those graces of character, which are to the consistent Christian when he mingles with the world, what the glory on the face of Moses was, when he came forth, enlightened, inspired, and godlike, from deep communion with the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

Fourthly, are we drawing nigh to God in watchfulness? "Watch unto prayer," says the Apostle. And again, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded." There is a kind of grace, which may be called *wakefulness* of character in respect of our duty. It is the opposite of giddiness; and it seems naturally to spring of true reverence, as in turn it gives birth to the spirit of self-control. We read of Abel, and Enoch, and Moses, that they endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Thus, if we put before the eyes of our mind the unwritten word of God, which abideth for ever in the Heavens, we shall be strengthened by faith in our unseen Saviour and Comforter, to put aside many temptations, which would otherwise be too strong for us. For, having our minds thus opened to behold spiritual things, we shall be on our guard against evil thoughts,

and watch for all means of grace, and all secret helps, which the Spirit of God may in silence and prayer suggest to us. Hence we shall be strengthened to command our passions, to restrain our unruly appetites, to mortify our lusts, and come more than conquerors out of every temptation. Thus shall we be led into that holy obedience of faith, which, when carried out in the spirit of self-devotion already spoken of, is the surest and best criterion of our drawing nigh to God.

It will not, I trust, have escaped you, that all the modes of drawing nigh, above mentioned, are really acts and instances of faith, though I have not so much as used the word. Supposing, then, we draw nigh, not in a selfish presumption of our being especial favourites with God, but with humble faith in his own righteous promise to receive whoever comes to him in sincerity, He will daily more and more draw nigh to us, by exalting the earnestness of faith into the cheerfulness of hope, and by hallowing our hope with the blessedness of love. For it is God who gives strength to the weak, and courage to the timid; who counsels the embarrassed, and comforts them that mourn. It is God who trains up the devout child into the prevailing prophet, and who gives the Apostles more than all the fathers and brothers and sisters whom they left. It is God, even now, as much as ever, who overrules our blind strivings after good, until our hearts take hold of a blessedness, greater than our minds conceived. Thus there comes, to men who follow Christ in any rough path of duty, a hope begotten of experience, and a peace of mind which passeth understanding; a pleasantness, far greater

than any pleasure from seeking to please themselves. Only, be you partakers in will of the Saviour's cross, rather than followers of him, for the loaves and fishes by the way. On that condition only, if the patience of Christ hath its perfect work in you, can your patience work an experience of God's dealings with his children; and only such experience works a hope, which can never be ashamed.

Be not you, then, my young friends, frightened at the idea of trusting yourselves, both for the guidance of your lives, and for the fixing of your lot, to the God who cannot lie. Dare to make the experiment of drawing nigh to him in the morning of your days, with the prayer of self-devotion, with sincerity, with humility, and with sober watchfulness. So may you be spared the agony and the doubt of drawing nigh to him late in shame, and remorse, and uselessness, with the possibility of being driven far from him by guilty despair.

Do not grudge him now the best you have to give—bring the firstlings of your thoughts, the freshness of your minds. So shall Almighty God, the Father, the Saviour, and the Comforter, draw nigh to you in the experience of this life, with blessings a hundredfold for every pure aspiration of your hearts to his holiness; and, though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, all the secrets of the world to come, we know that the Sanctifier is also the life-giver; and at the right hand of the Father, where our Saviour Jesus prepares a place and a crown for them who are partakers of his cross, there are pleasures for evermore.

There may God enable us in heart and mind to ascend, by now drawing nigh to him with a fervent spirit, so that even if the time of our departure come suddenly as a thief in the night, we may not be like plants moved only to wither in some uncongenial atmosphere, but may be a people fitted for the place prepared for us; even as children trained in discipline by a wise father, reaching the full stature of the spiritual man, before we enter into the joy of our Lord.

LAMPETER, *Oct. 2, 1853.*

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## SERMON III.

### *WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD.*

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*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. 1 John iii. 1.*

It is what some would say was the equivocal property, but we may venture to call it the glory, of our earliest known ancestors in Great Britain, that they have handed down a memorable example of the power of conscience. The very climate of our island may then, as now, have tinged the imagination of its inhabitants with gloom; and the main characteristic of their piety, as of the ancient forests and rugged masses among which they worshipped, was a spell of awe which lay heavy on the spirit. But we know, that the strong expectation of a future life had a practical force among them which surprised the more sensual nations of the south; and that this sentiment not only animated their courage in war, but influenced their dealings in those<sup>1</sup> homelier matters which require the agency of money; indeed, it was assumed, as a fundamental truth, in all the structure of

<sup>1</sup> *Negotiorum ratio, et exactio crediti, ad inferos deferebatur.*—*Pomp. Mela.*

their society. It was also one of their ideas, that no less a sacrifice than the life of man was required to appease that heavenly power whom they believed to witness our actions and to judge us accordingly. Some persons may remark, that such a ritual of blood savours of Moloch; while others may take a pleasure in comparing it rather with the trial of faith, when the patriarch withheld not from Jehovah his son, even his only son whom he loved. Or again, it may be considered an unconscious prophecy among the heathen of a more perfect oblation to be offered. But no candid observer will refuse to admit, that, however fierce were such customs, they yet existed among a people, who had deep thoughts of the unseen God, and of the value of the soul in his sight, since they thought it could be redeemed by no sacrifice less precious than that of itself.

It was in a more sunny climate, but amidst a race of men not cast in so heroic a mould, that dances and song, libations of wine and offerings of flowers, were deemed sufficient testimonies of thankfulness to the Giver of good. Just as now the stern sabbath of Scotland differs from the carnival of Naples, even such was the contrast of old. But we find in every nation, wherever mankind had not fallen below humanity into a mere bestial state, some attempts made, either to acknowledge the goodness of God, or to deprecate his wrath, or to conjecture, under what form, or conception of the mind, he ought to be adored. Such attempts might differ from each other as widely as the aspirations of Milton from those of a common mechanic; and

might be wise or foolish, lofty or grovelling, as in any case the degree of purity of the national conscience enabled the Spirit of God to retain a footing, or the degree of cultivation (under Divine Providence) enabled a sufficient balance to be supplied by the understanding. Only, so far as anywhere the conception was pure or elevating, we doubt not that in all this was working one and the selfsame spirit. Nor was that spirit any other than the great Being, who in no age or country has left himself altogether without witness. It has been truly remarked by one of our profoundest living preachers, that the writers of the Old Testament, though they represent their countrymen as especially favoured, still do not conceive of all other nations as living without God in the world. On the contrary, if any Pharaoh declares, that he knows not the Lord, it is mentioned as a mark of especial hardness of heart. But the earlier Pharaoh did know the Lord. Abimelech, king of Gerar, knew the Lord. Melchisedec, though possibly a prince of the race<sup>1</sup> of Ham, was a priest of the most high God. Balaam, the prophet of Midian, was certainly not wanting in knowledge of God, however unlike his end may have been to the end of the righteous.

It seems worth while occasionally dwelling on such clear instances, in order to be reminded of the universality of the idea of God, and of the purely spiritual manner in which such knowledge is kept alive. Persons greatly mistake, who suppose that in the day of

<sup>1</sup> This is implied by his name, as compared with that of Adonisedec, and the city of each.



Judgment men will be called to account for any other talents than those which they have received. Nor is it a less mistake, to suppose that the eternal providence, and the love, and the grace of God, cannot manifest themselves in all the efficacy of their mysterious, but purely spiritual personality, by a thousand channels, very different from what are required, if the religion of the heart is to be turned into a syllogism of logic.

This is the condemnation, that light was in the world, and evil men chose darkness rather than light. For this cause, the wrath of God was declared, because the corrupt heathen, seeing clearly his eternal power and godhead, stifled that knowledge by unrighteousness (or held it in wickedness). There was a time when men talked of the state of nature as a savage state. But most of our profoundest inquirers now believe, that the savage state is not natural, but is a vile degeneracy. It is the fall of Adam repeated again and again. For Almighty God did not make man to creep on his belly with the beasts, or to be a wild hunter like Nimrod, and like the Tatar hordes, or to be afraid of the tiger like some tribes of India; but he bade him look up in prayer like Abel, and be the father of nations like Abraham and Jacob, and subdue the earth, which was his portion as the offspring of God, until he put all things under his feet.

When however the true idea of God was once lost, there might be no end to the erroneous wanderings of opinion. Some might think mere animal life all which either had been, or should be. Some might think natural agencies, the Sun and the host of heaven, were

destined to bear rule over them. Some might fall into what is vulgarly called idolatry, the worship of stocks and stones; others, my brethren, into that which is quite as truly and really idolatry, but which most of us practise, the worship of their own interests or their own passions; only giving to each some holy name, like the heathen called his image Lord, or King. Thus thick darkness might be said to cover the people, and gross darkness the nations. It is my firm belief, from which no one will ever terrify me, that God mercifully winked at the times of that ignorance; and that such often-abused texts, as “There is none other name given but one,”—are to be clearly interpreted in a spiritual, and not in a grossly *nominal* sense.

Yet, not the less, let us yield hearty thanks to Almighty God, who at last was pleased to shew manifestly unto what likeness we should liken him, or under what image the Invisible and Incomprehensible should be adored. He has given us his Son, born of the seed of David. He has embodied in that Son, the wisdom, and the power, which make up the fulness of the Godhead. He has thereby shewn himself as a rebuker of them that sin, as a receiver of them that return, as a Comforter of them that mourn, and, in every part of his dealings with all mankind, as acting the part of a Father towards his children. It may never perhaps have occurred to some persons present, that Christ is properly to us very nearly what an image was to a heathen in old time. For the heathen knew there was a God beyond; only he could not raise his thoughts to address a pure spirit, without the intervention of some

visible object. Even so, we were constantly in danger of lapsing from a right conception of the invisible God, until we beheld his grace and truth made clear in his express likeness. But having learnt what character, that is, what stamp of spirit, was in Christ Jesus, we are in no more danger of worshipping Jehovah under any earthly form, such as fire; though indeed to the wicked he is a consuming fire. Nor again, do we liken him to any visible Sun, though he may be called the Sun of righteousness; nor yet to any star, though he is Lord of all the hosts of heaven. But righteousness, wisdom, goodness, grace, and truth, are the characteristics we find in Christ; and these, we feel, must be the likeness of God. Thus, I venture to say, Christ is our image. He is the medium, through which alone we form an adequate conception of the invisible. He thus heals the strife between matter and spirit; bridges over the great chasm, which intervened between man encompassed with infirmities, and the purity of God; while, by pouring out his soul in voluntary death, he provides an atonement, with which guilt, otherwise hopeless, may associate itself, and so be turned into a healthful and accepted remorse.

Yet in calling Christ, as the apostle Paul called him, the likeness of God, far be from us any idea, that this likeness was of a mere transitory or reflected kind; or that it could have been truly exhibited bodily, without an underlying groundwork, or a present reality (hypo-stasis) of that eternal wisdom, which is of the only wise God. The old fathers of the Church laboured hard to express the necessity of believing in such an

eternal reality (as opposed to a transient assumption) of the divine likeness, when they framed the Nicene Creed, and when they used the technical phrases, which we translate, substance and persons. Nor is it in any other faith that we conceive ourselves, in preaching Christ, to be preaching the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The man Jesus of Nazareth would not have claimed our adoration, nor have been our adequate Mediator, if the wisdom of God, which was from eternity, had not manifested itself as the Word, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. By the term *likeness* it seems especially meant that Christ is the visible representation of God, who is otherwise invisible. But again, not the less, let us venture, in all the simple freedom which the apostles exemplify in their writings, to speak not only of the Son of God, but also of the Son of Man. For, here again, Christ were not our Mediator, unless he were verily and indeed both. If, as coming forth from the Father, he embodies the divine wisdom, it is as being born of woman, that he puts on, in the character of our humanity, the most familiar features of a Son. Thus he assures us, that we too are sons of one Father, which is in Heaven.

So great an idea had been partly divined by those prophets of the Athenians, from whom St Paul quotes, "For we are also God's offspring." But it is when confirmed by our Saviour, that this idea becomes our great safeguard against every falsehood or corruption in religion. It preserves us, as we have already seen, from any kind of idolatry. For it shews us, that at

least nothing less than our own spirit is to be worshipped, seeing that our God is the Father of spirits. "Seeing then that we are his offspring, we ought not to think the Godhead is like to corruptible things, e. g. silver and gold," &c. Moreover, the same idea prevents us also from refining away our God into an abstract notion, since under the character of a Father is included the conception of will, and of personal affection. Nor again does it suffer us to be absorbed by that greatest temptation to cultivated minds, (though here we are hardly educated enough for it,) the danger of losing the lawgiver, in the unfathomable immensity, and the indefinitely minute causation of the law, which he has given to all creation, as a thing which shall not be broken. For, from this likeness of God as our Father, we learn that not merely the forecasting will, and the wise arrangement, but either the affections of man, or rather something correspondent to, and capable of implanting those affections, must be taken into our idea of Him who holdeth our steps in life, and suffereth not our feet to slip.

But still farther, we are also hence taught, not to dread the most High, as a passionate and vindictive Being, who registers the vows of mankind, in order to be condemning witnesses of their failures, or who so rejoices in the uncontrolled sway of his own will, as to seek glory in being called a God of might, rather than a God of righteousness. For this word Father of Heaven<sup>1</sup>, and (as conveyed in the word Father) the

<sup>1</sup> The modern comma after Father, in the first verse of the Litany, is without authority, and implies a misconception of the sentiment, as well as forgetfulness of the Latin *Pater de cœlis*, and of the old English idiom, as in the phrase "thieves of mercy."

love of God constrains us, to believe earnestly, that he views with compassionate regard whatever is presented to him in the name of his Son, as well as to hope all things, even of those who, like the younger son, are as yet in a far country, not knowing how much their husks fall short of the bread of life. But even if they remain among the swine, and so perish, being hurried into the deep, (and that some men do so perish, is a most sad and necessary warning) we still do not doubt, that the Father had divided to them their full portion of his goods, though they wickedly squandered it in riotous living.

But again, we do not indeed hence unlearn that all-concerning doctrine of a judgment to come. Yet we do learn, that we shall be judged by no harsh requirement, such as an earthly father would think unfair for his own children, nor by any other principles than those which Christ the firstbegotten of many brethren, has already exemplified in the flesh, and daily recommends to us by His Spirit. Does any man then tremble (and who of any gravity must not sometimes do so?) at the thought of all hearts being open, and all secrets known, before that tribunal from which a few years only separate the youngest of us? Let him know, that like as a father pitieth his own children, so doth God measure out judgment in mercy. Although, then, even the fondest of fathers cannot prevent an incurable disease, or a determined viciousness, from hurrying his children to the grave, and thus even the Almighty, being fettered by the perfection of his own holy being, *cannot* prevent the wicked from ultimately

eating the bitter fruit of their own doings—yet we have the consolation of knowing that nothing but the voluntary alienation of ourselves from all his teaching, and his guidance, can prevent him from perfecting the work of mercy He has begun in us. *Can* we be so insane as thus to neglect so great a salvation? Surely we will not by choice be so untrue. Almighty God, then, will take care we shall not be beguiled.

Again, as the idea of God being our Father, softens the expectation, without however destroying the certainty, of a judgment to come, so it exercises a like soothing influence, yet not an alteration of facts, in the affairs of the world which now is. It does not, for example, remove inequalities, either of station, or of mind, or of a spiritual order. For, as an earthly father may divide his estate, to the eldest son more, and to the younger sons less, or as he may send one a sailor to battle with the storm, and another to some safer calling of more apparent ease, thus our Heavenly Father makes some of his children kings, and some beggars, and to some he gives wisdom or length of days, to others contempt and an early grave. Yet we maintain, that with all this variety of lot, God gives to every man a blessing. There is no one of his children, who has not received of him the power, either of acting, or bearing, or praying, or in some way of playing a tolerable part, in a scheme so large as to require every sort of inequality, yet in no part withdrawn from the control of a forecasting wisdom, or the embrace of a redeeming love.

To be brief, there is in things spiritual no embarrassing enigma, and in things temporal no inequality of lot, no suffering, and no disappointment, in which we may not gather either instruction, or comfort, from the habitual conception of God, not as Power, not as Life, not as Law, though indeed He is all these, but as our Heavenly Father.

Behold, then, what manner of love he hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. We are sons by creation, in that we partake of that forethought, that reason, that power of originating action, and so of becoming creators to ourselves, and controlling within limits our own destiny, which probably constitute what in the book of Genesis is called the likeness of God. We are also sons by redemption, in that, when we were estranged by sin from the great family of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, the very Son, coming forth from the Eternal, opened again in the flesh a communication with heaven. Thereby he set up again the fallen ladder of Bethel, the great chain of childlike prayers ascending from true hearts, and blessings descending from a love divine which passeth knowledge. We also who believe, and are baptized, are sons by clear adoption, for we are taken into Christ; and He who is our head, representing all mankind, has stepped, as the Son of Man, into the place of Israel, who was reckoned of old the firstborn of Jehovah. Whatever things were written of old time, are now written for our consolation, for they are the breathings of that Spirit, which ever dwells in the hearts



of all faithful men. The Psalms are ours, and the Prophets are ours. When we are distressed, the words of David prophesy our distress; when we repent, his restoration is the sure type of ours. And if ever, by the alone grace of God, we arise and shine in all godliness of life, the glory of the Lord is then risen upon us, and we partake of an inheritance which cannot pass away. For if we are sons, whatever the Father hath, is ours. Thus, even that masculine-minded prelate, St Cyprian, was not afraid to say, that which Christ is, we shall be, if only we shall have followed Christ. And it was the logic of a greater than Cyprian, if we are sons, then heirs, and fellowheirs of the saints. It was also the prayer of one greater than Paul, even of him whose prayer cannot fail, that as he was in the Father, and the Father in him, so we might be in the Son, and the spirit of sonship be made perfect in us.

Lastly then, brethren, consider, what manner of men ought we to be. If God hath given us so great a hope, shall we not purify ourselves, even as He is pure? We are naturally shocked, if we see the son of some noble family, or of a respected gentleman, or, not least, of a clergyman, degrading himself by low and vicious company. We are instinctively tempted to exclaim, Young man, this place, or this employment, does not become your father's son. It does not befit either your blood, or your breeding, to share the vice of sots, or the sloth of fools. Even so, brethren, sinful habits, impure passions, and selfish engrossments, are not becoming in those, upon whom such love is bestowed, that they are called the sons of God. Shall we love darkness and

ignorance, who are the offspring of the Father of light? Or, if He is the very Truth, shall we be disingenuous and insincere? If He is Love, should we be malicious and backbiting? If He is Good, and doeth good to all, shall we be grossly selfish, and have no higher object in God's world, than to lay hand greedily upon whatever is pleasant to the lust of the flesh, or the lust of eyes, or the pride of life? Then will even Cicero, that ancient forerunner of Christ to the mind of St Augustine, rebuke us when he says, "In nothing does man more nearly approach to the Deity, than in doing good to his fellow-creatures." Then, above all, will our Master, our eldest brother, and our restorer to the family of heaven, remind us of his own diviner words, that by doing good, even to the unthankful, we approve ourselves as the children of our Father, who letteth his sun shine on the evil, and on the good.

Strive we then, while it is called to-day, to inherit the spirit of our eternal and most merciful Father. For thereby we may hope to realise upon earth that temper, which is both the characteristic of heaven, and the easy condition upon which alone man can enter therein, as the place of his spiritual kindred, and his eternal home.

LAMPETER, *April 24, 1853.*

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## SERMON IV.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

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*Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.* Romans xv. 4.

THE study of history has always been allowed to be one of the happiest means of awakening and improving the mind. It has even been called wisdom, teaching by instances. For, if it rise in any degree to its high vocation, it summons the men of past times to move before us as they lived; it enables us to hear them, though dead, yet speak: to appreciate, perhaps, the difficulties which surrounded them; and, by the unconscious effect of sympathy, to engraft on our own minds the power of confronting with no less manliness any similar trials which may possibly beset our path. So eminently is this true, that the man who has traced with throbbing heart the career of great patriots, stricken down perhaps by overwhelming odds, or of great thinkers, who have either embodied their wisdom in legislation, or bid the eloquent page glow with its record for ever, has in all probability *assimilated* himself in some measure to the mighty of whom he has read:

for he has lived over in thought what was their life in act: he has thus drunk into their spirit, and by breathing a kindred atmosphere has become partaker of their very nature.

But if such assertions may be ventured of great men and deeds in general, they more emphatically apply to such records as we have inherited of the earnest aspirations of good men, in any time or country, to the eternal source of their being, and the mysterious controller of their destiny. That solemn ritual of Greek tragedy, which our own Milton did not disdain to recommend as a repository of "grave sententious wisdom;" those orators who could tell an incensed multitude, that they rejoiced in having brought down on their country a disastrous defeat (if Heaven so ordered it) rather than see her forfeit her old character for honour, and her consciousness of self-respect; those still loftier teachers, to whom their country's mythology was only the fanciful expression of a far higher and more remote, yet ever-present principle, and he, who declared the world to bear as clear a testimony to its Author, as a finished poem does to the existence of a poet; while no really great man, he thought, could be without a certain divine inspiration—all these, I say, and other records of kindred meaning, stir us with an emotion of sympathy far deeper than is inspired by the ordinary subjects of the historian. We watch with intense interest such men groping their way towards an eminence of light, on which not our own arm has placed us; we sigh at the weakness of our race, as we occasionally see them wander in some hopeless maze of speculation;

and we can scarcely refrain from an exulting cry, when some pure conscience and reaching intellect seem almost to lay hands "unknowingly" upon the very mercy-seat of the unsearchable I AM THAT I AM.

Yet after all, the result accruing from such teachers among the Gentiles, is rather touching our hearts with wholesome emotion, than furnishing our minds with any groundwork on which doctrine may be reared. We read them as sympathising critics, but cannot sit at their feet as pupils. We have need therefore to look elsewhere for more definite teaching. And if we seek such aid in the Hebrew Scriptures, we soon find reason to believe, that He who nowhere kept himself without witness, yet *gave the Spirit in larger measure* to those who knew him by his name Jehovah, and worshipped him on Sion, the mountain of his holy place. Nor is it necessary here to dwell on that mere external evidence, which in itself is not unimportant. The space, which custom allots me, may be more profitably employed in directing your thoughts to some of the characteristic features of the books themselves.

We are speaking now of the Hebrew Scriptures. Perhaps the first thing to notice is the manifest fidelity of the writers, both as respects the manners of their country, the character of the people described, and the infirmities, nay, the very crimes even, of men whom they delight to honour. We read in their pages of life, as it exists now in the East; and as it may be believed with partial variation to have existed for many ages. We find no attempt to represent king, or prophet, or priest, as perfect: the tyranny of one, the passion of

another, the weak connivance of the third, are set forth in their naked simplicity. And this ingenuous character is the more striking, because it is directly opposed to the usual genius of Oriental narrative, which delights rather in pompous and inflated exaggeration. It is also opposed more especially to the writings of the later Scribes and Rabbins, which abound in laborious trifling, and transparent fable. Nor can any reason be given for this superiority of the older books more obviously true, than that the writers conceived themselves to be acting under a responsibility of a strictly religious kind. They took up the pen to celebrate events which were not merely the triumphs of their race, but the manifestations of the power and the truth of the Lord God of Israel. They had heard that He abhorreth the sacrifice of lying lips, and they would not blot the scriptures animated by his Spirit with any lying legend, or cunningly devised fable<sup>1</sup>. Hence arises, (what, as far as the East is concerned, seems to have been then unprecedented) the strictly historical and trustworthy character of Hebrew literature. Growing up under the shadow of the temple, superintended by those who worshipped a God of truth in the beauty of holiness, yet read every seventh year in the ears of all the people, it has that double guarantee, which is derived from intelligent and sacerdotal authority, and from exposure to the contempora-

<sup>1</sup> How far I now think the expression of ideas by way of narrative any just ground for objection—or how far it is conceivable that God may have instructed nations by imagination and poetry, as well as by fact and prose—will partly appear from a later sermon in this volume, and partly I hope for a fitter opportunity of explaining elsewhere.—*March 6th, 1855.*

neous criticism of masses of mankind. Even those books, such as Kings and Chronicles, which dwell chiefly on the outward history of the nation, have hence no common interest. They carry us as it were behind the scenes of an important part in the great drama of the history of the world. They shew us events happening, and the subtle causes which produced them; man proposing, but God disposing; Israel rebelling, and Jehovah smiting; Cyrus rearranging his conquests, and Jehovah (whom the conqueror knew not) wielding him as an instrument to restore his people Israel.

Yet a still higher interest attaches itself to this collection of records, when we consider them as a history emphatically of religion: that is, in the first place, of the aspiration of the human heart to its Creator<sup>1</sup>. For we then read of men of like passions with ourselves, treading a course which resembles in its great analogies our own; men now striving, and now at peace; now sinning, and (as a consequence) suffering; now crying unto the Lord, and the Lord hearing them, and delivering them out of all their trouble. It is from this point of view, that the Book of Psalms, in particular, may come home to every one of our hearts. Who cannot trace, in the vivid delineation of the Psalmist's personal experience, in his humiliation, his strong crying and his tears, his trust in God, his firm assurance of the final

<sup>1</sup> If any one supposes such a sentence as this either to exclude the preparations of the heart by God's providence and grace, or to imply indifference or despair as to truth (as if thoughts and inferences were less trustworthy than sensations), I can only wonder at his ingenuity in misunderstanding. What would such a person think of the first and second books of Hooker?

triumph of the right, a type, as it were, and a portrait by forecast, alike of the struggles of whatever is noblest in the whole human race, and especially of Him, its great Captain and its Head, who was to cherish the almost expiring flame, until he made the struggle end in victory. Do we fret, as it were, in uneasy anxiety at our short life, and its ever-threatening end—the Psalmist teaches us to make such fear an instrument of spiritual growth. “Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days, that I may be certified how long I have to live.” “Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.” Yet, notwithstanding such appeal, do our spirits sink within us, either for our own back-sliding, or for the blasphemy of the multitude on every side? How is such a feeling expressed better than in the words, “My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me: and the sight of mine eyes hath gone from me. My lovers and my neighbours did stand looking upon my trouble;...and they that went about to do me evil talked of wickedness, and imagined deceit all the day long”? Would we have some one, alike righteous and friendly, to whom we may appeal with confidence? “Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from thee. O Lord my God, be not thou far from me.” Or does the consciousness of our own unworthiness bow us down, so that almost we say with St Peter, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man?”—Again we may adopt the piteous cry, “Innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and



my heart hath failed me." "O Lord, let it be thy *pleasure*—that is, let it be the will of thy free grace,—to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me."

But, again, are such hopes and aspirations the jest of the ungodly, and do the drunkards make songs upon us, because we mourn in our prayer, and are vexed?—"Fret not thyself," says the same faithful monitor, "because of the ungodly: neither be dismayed at the proud doer: yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be clean gone: hope thou in the Lord, and keep his way: when the ungodly shall perish, thou shalt see it." Yet does the kingdom of heaven tarry, and the foundations of the earth seem out of course? "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure," is still the precept; "be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart:" let the man of the earth leave much substance for his babes; but as for us, we will behold the presence of God in righteousness: the day cometh for us to be satisfied with his presence, when we wake up transformed according to his likeness.

What is it, then, brethren, which afflicts us? Sickness, and pining, of the body or of the heart, shrinking from the sneer of the wicked, remorse for our own sin, fear of again offending, fear of death, and of the dim unseen, which is behind death? In all these things the Psalmist persuades us we are more than conquerors; for in the light which God shed upon him in the valley of shadows we too see light: we too have a share in the songs of faith, which God his maker gave him in the night of his affliction. Said not the Apostle well, therefore, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope"?

It may be interesting to remark here, that although a very rigid criticism would find slender grounds for determining how many of the Psalms were absolutely written by David the son of Jesse, there is a sufficient consonance between the events of his life and the sentiments of a large portion of the number, to countenance decidedly that belief, which was the tradition alike of the Jewish church, and of our own. There is the same contrast in the life between David innocent and David guilty, as in the Psalms between his joyful exuberance of trust, and his deep cry of remorse. Contrast in your memories the shepherd stripling, with his heart yet unstained, going forth to do battle with the giant warrior, and the guilty king ascending the hill with downcast brow, not daring to let his mighty men scourge the Benjamite, who had cursed the Lord's anointed. "Let him curse; the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." Now this is the difference between innocence and guilt. Even so, how jubilant the cry of communion with his God: "The Lord is my strength, whom then shall I fear?" And how sad the agony of penitence: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves have gone over me; my soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto hell."

May we not learn there, brethren, the eternal and ineffaceable difference between doing the thing which is right, and forsaking the law of Him whose name is Holy? And was not such a lesson one of the principal reasons for which Scripture was written? Yet even in such dark depths we find Scripture still written for our consolation: since a way of sighs and tears, but still a way of hope, is pointed to in the words: "Thou shalt make

me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.”

On turning forward to the prophets we find their general character is very much the same. One of their most striking features is their evidently intense perception of spiritual truths. This is the more remarkable, because mere religion (as taught by a priesthood) has been thought sometimes to blunt the moral sense, by making the Deity an arbitrary being, who acts apart from the eternal laws of right. Whereas it is apparent on the face, that neither the Psalmist nor the Prophets had any low or mean conception of the services of that sanctuary where the honour of Jehovah dwelt. The Psalms were in fact the main part of the Jewish Liturgy; for the strains which now sweep through Westminster Abbey are the same as were chanted of old in the temple of Sion; and the Prophets never burst out into such indignant strains, as when their hearts burn within them at the sight of altars thrown down, the ark taken, or the temple defiled. Yet with all this, they ever lay most emphatic stress upon the weightier matters of the law; upon the moral dispositions, and mental being, which are both the graces of the Holy Spirit, and the processes by which we grow up into the full stature of the children of God.

If the hands are full of unjust gain, “bring no more incense, it is an abomination.” If the feet are swift to evil, “who hath required it of you to tread my courts? saith the Lord.” Will your solemn assemblies at new moons, and your sabbaths, atone for a double heart, and for adding sin to sin? Can you by passionate prayers and ceremonial observances make a covenant with death?

That is indeed to make *lies* your refuge. Judgment and righteousness are the line and the plummet with which the Lord layeth His sure foundation-stone. "Come now, let us *reason* together, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, <sup>1</sup>*shall they* be as white as snow? if they be red like crimson, shall they (at the same time) be as wool?" *Think it not*, is the inexorable answer implied in the original: but "if ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land." "Wash you, make you clean: cease to do evil." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, for He will (then) have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

We have in such texts, which might be multiplied indefinitely, distinct intimation of the irreconcilable aversion of the Almighty to any form of moral evil, yet of his abundant readiness to pardon and save the sinner, returning from his sin. Now it is this truly spiritual character of the Bible which fits it to be a book for all nations. Hence we do not fear to put it in the hands of the most ignorant, not indeed disparaging other means of grace, or forgetting that scriptural language may be made the vehicle of the worst passions, and alleged to support the most dangerous errors: but we do so in the conviction, that to the pure all things are pure, and in the trust that He whose Word came of old to prophets and teachers of righteousness, will not suffer even the record of the same Word, which then came, to return altogether empty. Hence also our

<sup>1</sup> This interrogative rendering is grammatically as probable as the common one, and in sequence of thought, more so.

anxiety to place the same record of many a divine message to guilty man in the hands of the heathen: not from any bigoted dogma that the God and Father of all consolation will burn his children for not knowing what they were never taught; but from a perception, that the record of the holy words of prophets and evangelists has a natural tendency to awaken whatever is good in man, and so (if properly used) to help forward the moral restoration of a fallen nature. Thus then we believe with the Apostle, that whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our instruction.

There is yet farther, however, a distinct (but kindred) feature in the Hebrew prophets, which stamps their writings with peculiar value. It is that dim yet undoubted anticipation of a more perfect way than any commonly known in their age, which was to be revealed, when the Hope of Israel should come. In other words, it is that foreboding of One anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, which may especially be termed the Spirit of prophecy; and in virtue of which we ascribe to its possessors a more than ordinarily large measure of (that sacred impulse, which may be described as) inspiration. We do not indeed assert, that the Hebrew prophets knew precisely what manner of salvation they foretold; for they often shadow it forth under such temporal deliverances, as to make the literal, or Jewish interpretation of their predictions, not altogether unreasonable. Nor, indeed, do they themselves make any claim to omniscience. The Word of the Lord comes to their heart or conscience for a particular purpose, and they speak it; but where their own faculties and usual

means of information can come into play, they naturally exercise them. Thus their language is simple Hebrew, and only when they reach Babylon, Chaldaic; the countries which they describe are those adjoining their own; their general range of knowledge is that of their age; in short, the circumscribed limits of their horizon stand out at every turn. Still, amidst this imperfect knowledge, we find those accents which stir the heart like the sound of a trumpet, foretelling with the strongest confidence the ultimate triumph of pure religion, the springing of a righteous Branch out of the stem of Jesse, and the reign of a King who should execute justice and mercy. New virtues, they say, shall flourish with this new dispensation; the nations shall not learn war any more; the sacrifice of the (human) heart shall be counted above that of bulls and oxen.

Although then some circumstances in the description of God's Firstborn and Elect, by whom this change is to be accomplished, may primarily apply to collective Israel, [many others<sup>1</sup> will admit of no such application. Israel surely was not the child whom a virgin was to bear; Israel did not make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; Israel scarcely reconciled that strangely blended variety of suffering and triumph, which was predicted of the Messiah.]

But however that may be, it is indisputable, that a change has partly come about, and is still partly proceeding; such as these ancient seers foretold. There

<sup>1</sup> I no longer feel confident of the assertion in brackets; but now believe that *all* the prophecies have primarily an application nearly contemporaneous.—*Febr.* 11, 1855.

is a growing society in the world, which, though ever lashed by stormy waves, seems still founded on a rock. Its members own as their Head one whom they hail as Prince of Peace; an anointed one, a first-born, and an elect—a Person, in whose mysterious unity they are able to combine things which might have been deemed incompatible; majesty and weakness, grace and awe, suffering and conquering, death and immortality, frail man and perfect God. In him the mystery is unveiled, the riddle is read aright. In his kingdom men are exalted by humility, triumphant by patience, immortal by death: and to this his city not built with hands we are now taught by the interpreting revolution of events to apply what Isaiah spake of his ideal Sion: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

Thus, after the lapse of centuries, the world has seen the grand anticipations of those who worshipped Jehovah in a little corner of the world, fulfilled in a sense more magnificent than they themselves expected. Perhaps indeed this gift of foresight is not really more excellent or desirable than such a keen perception of the truths which concern our peace as we have already found in the Old Testament. Nor dare I say that the one has not been sometimes confounded with the other. Yet this gift of prediction, as distinct from predication, is so remarkable a quality as to invest the prophetic

writings (according, at least, to the more received view of them) with a character almost unique, and to furnish a distinct ground for the Apostle's holding, that "whatever things were written aforetime were written for our instruction."

But if for *his instruction*, brethren, who had seen the Lord Jesus, much more for that of those whose lot is cast in later days. We, too, like St Paul, may have our hearts warmed by whatever is glowing and excellent in the older writers; we, like him, may trace the great stream of divine Providence, and admire the unconscious prefigurements of the great Teacher of the world: we, moreover, unlike him, may gather corresponding instruction from his own writings also, and from those of his companions in the ministry of the Word. For though these later writings are scarcely comprised in the Scriptural canon to which our Saviour appealed, yet they come from men who had the best opportunities of information; who had seen the Son of God incarnate, and had been animated by the Holy Spirit of God descending: who also, in the power of what they believed, either from eyesight or from credible testimony, converted kingdoms, and built up the church of Christ on the ruins of the gigantic power which they overthrew. Either the Apostles therefore understood Christianity, or else no one did. And now, suppose St John or St Peter were at present to re-appear on earth, with what eager and devout curiosity should not we appeal to either of them in our controversies, and entreat him to clear up our difficulties! Who would deny his narrative of some miracle of our Lord's, or dispute his opinion as



to what was pure and undefiled religion? But then may we not say, that such a power of appeal is already in our hands? St John writing cannot be less trustworthy than St John preaching. In neither case could he be termed omniscient; in both cases men might carry away a wrong conception of his meaning; yet surely in both we ought (as Christians) to award him and his fellows a respectful and candid hearing. On this ground then, that the Apostles generally saw our Lord, and had the best means of information as to his religion, their writings seem to be properly added to those of the Old Testament which they explain. They were men, indeed, compassed with infirmities like ourselves, and they professed only to know in part, and to prophesy in part. Yet God has not given us any higher written authority, and the highest which He has given must be sufficient for our salvation. But why reason from theory? Search rather their writings in practice, brethren, and you will find them sufficient for your peace. If indeed you disdain rational and proper helps, such as a competent knowledge of the original tongues, and of the customs, manners, and modes of thought of the persons using them, you may stumble grievously in this, as in any other inquiry. You may then, if both unlearned and also unstable, wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction. But if you are content to start with such a key as the Church puts into your hands in the form of the three primitive Creeds, or of the English Prayer-book generally, you cannot go greatly wrong, even in speculation. And if you use the Scriptures, as they were intended to be used, chiefly for warning, for encouragement, for consolation, you will find them the book of books—a shrine

from whence light will stream on your path, and an oracle whose words will be comfort to your soul.

For, after all difficulties which may be raised, and all distinctions which must be made, these Hebrew and Christian Scriptures seem likely ever to constitute the book dearest to the downcast and the contrite—to the bereaved, the outcast, and the Magdalene—to all them that are stricken or afflicted in mind, body, or estate. So Collins, a man of the rarest genius and largest endowments, solaced the lucid intervals of an overwrought and shattered intellect, with *one* book—“*it was the best,*” he said—and it was the Bible. So, many a soul stricken with remorse has been lured back to the way of life: and so, (what after all, believe me, is far better,) many a pure spirit has been strengthened to preserve its garments of fine linen unspotted through life, and so entered *without doubt* into an inheritance undefiled.

Lastly, from the same source, we ever may derive strength to resign those whom we love best into the hands of a merciful Creator and Redeemer; not fearing also ourselves, when God shall call us, to answer, “Even so, Lord: for so it seemed good in thy sight. Now therefore into thy hands we commend our spirits; for Thou hast redeemed us, O thou God of Truth.”

LAMPETER, *Dec.* 1850.

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I print this sermon partly for the sake of comparison with one preached recently at Cambridge on the same subject. The reader will easily see that the four years intervening have somewhat extended my own views, yet left them for practical purposes very much the same.

Compare Jeremy Taylor, “A Sermon preached before the University of Dublin.” “Unless a light shining within our hearts . . . to look for Christ in the leaves of the Gospel is to look for the living amongst the dead.” Vol. vi. p. 393.

## SERMON V.

### *WHAT DOEST THOU HERE?*

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*Behold, a voice unto him that said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

1 Kings xix. 13.

To Jeroboam the son of Nebat belongs the evil pre-eminence of having made Israel to sin; yet it is not certain that he would have acknowledged himself to have changed the religion of his people, in such a sense as to have introduced any other God besides Jehovah. If at least we agree with those, who think the cherubim of gold about the mercy-seat were, from Egyptian associations, in the form of oxen, it will remain very probable that the two golden calves at Bethel and at Dan were intended to imitate, as certainly they were substitutes for, the sanctuary of the Lord in Zion. This is the more likely, since, although priests were made of the lowest of the people, yet the schools of the prophets were not rooted out of the land; the king himself, when anxious for his sick boy, sent his wife to consult Ahijah; probably at Gilgal, at Bethel, and at Shiloh, the altar of a pure worship still remained; and I think it no extravagant supposition, that round those isolated shrines the wondrous works of each succeeding prophet

may have been cherished in filial recollection, and the stories have gradually taken shape, which are now compiled in our sacred books of Chronicles and of Kings.

It would be very interesting, if we could learn how far these worshippers of the living God, on the height of Carmel or amid the stones of Bethel, maintained any communication with their priestly brethren at Jerusalem. Did they feel their hands strengthened so often as any man of God out of Judah prophesied destruction against an unbidden altar? Did they exchange vain hopes, as the downfall of one usurper after another might seem to open a momentary prospect of national reform; or did they mourn in common over the more decided apostasy from the God of their fathers which commences with the reign of Ahab?

Questions of this kind we cannot very distinctly answer. But certainly under Ahab, with his idolatrous wife, we first find the Sidonian deity BAAL honoured with rites perhaps licentious, and sometimes it would appear, like those of Moloch, stained with human blood. It is then that the great prophet Elijah comes upon the scene. Of all the sacred seers of the Old Testament, whose renown is due to their actions rather than to the embodiment of their inspiration in writing, none, unless it be Samuel, are more eminent than this fervid forerunner of the Baptist. Devout, fearless, eloquent, knowing in whom he has believed, and very jealous for that All-holy Being, whose likeness in man he deems debased by bowing down to any meaner thing, he is the worthy champion of a Church in ruins, the monitor of an

apostate nation, and alone a match for the four hundred priests of Baal. You see the genius of the man in the directness of the issue which he raises: "If Jehovah be God, *follow* him; but if Baal, then follow *him*." So he puts twelve stones in his altar, according to the number of the tribes of Israel: though ten out of the twelve have become apostate, the prophet cannot admit that the Lord has lost his dominion over the people whom He redeemed; nor will he be content until the hearts of all the children are turned to the God of their fathers.

Probably there must have been many among the spectators to whom such sentiments appeared to savour of the rashness of fanaticism. With both the king, who to oriental minds was as an angel of God, and the people, whose voice in modern times is considered the voice of God, arrayed against him, this rugged Tishbite from the wilderness must have seemed a strange ambassador; and his summons not to halt any longer between two opinions, can have sounded only as a challenge to condemn his own. "Would not it be better to have let well alone? What was the practical use of this crotchety zeal? Israel would last for their time. Besides, popular opinion had already pronounced its verdict, &c. &c."

In truth, there never will be wanting pleaders, either in the commonwealth of Israel, or in the debates of our own hearts, against any disagreeable necessity of a moral change. Some touch of conscience, some feeling of inconsistency between the language we use and the habits we have fallen into, some awakener in the form of a livelier expectation of the judgment of God

impending, will every now and then pass through the chambers of our mind; we bar it out as long as we conveniently can, or we raise a din to prevent its being heard, with the pleasant voices of our friends, or with the whispers of self-flattery; but it has an ugly way of thrusting itself forward into our most secret consciousness, as unbidden as Elijah on the path of Ahab; and in our solitude or in our sickness, over our Bible or in our church, by our friend's grave or by the example of some one with far less advantages, yet of far higher holiness than our own, it compels our hearts to thrill (perhaps reluctantly) at the question, "How long, oh man, haltest thou between two opinions? If the Holy and the Merciful be God, *follow* Him; but, if that sin of thine can save thee, then go on, obeying it, and blushing for it."

Such thoughts, I say, crossing the mind, breaking up occasionally its weed-grown soil, or startling us from the lethargy of habit, may be likened to Elijah, as playing a sort of analogous part. Such visitors may come unbidden. But if any one here has never known them, let him send an earnest prayer in search of them, and not grudge a little leisure in seeking them. It is far better they should come to us early in life, while we yet acknowledge Jehovah to be our strength, than that they should TARRY until strange gods, in the shape of selfishness, idleness, vice, have obtained dominion over us; better, in short, they should hasten to warn, than be DEFERRED until they can sound only to condemn. Whenever then such sternly wholesome questions present themselves, let us not refuse the trial which they ask.

There will indeed be opposite pleaders, in our natural love of pleasure, in our shrinking from self-denial, in our readiness to doubt whether all that this Elijah asks is really necessary, and in our willingness to halt a little longer between the will of God and the fear of man's opinion, or the wayward impulse of our own capricious heart. "What is this tone of assumed command, sounding out of another world, and asking obedience to an unwritten law, speaking in the name of an unseen master, and promising a hope of what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive? To ask, how long we halt between things which the mass of mankind greedily covets, and certain truths so subtle that all language applied to them is acknowledged to fall short of them, is to give a challenge, on which the great majority have already pronounced against the challenger. Something, we grant, is due to decorum; nor did we object to receive those assurances of the Divine mercy which have so often lulled our consciences into a placid slumber; but to require of us an absolute surrender of our thoughts and affections, or to present us this inexorable kind of choice, and bid us no longer halt, between Jehovah and Baal, God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, Life and Death, is an unnecessarily harsh dilemma. Human nature shrinks from it; flesh and blood revolt at it. Give us, however, a little delay, or a little compromise, and we will listen to you; let youth keep its recklessness untamed, let manhood be headstrong, vindictive, and ambitious, and let old age keep one hand in its money-bags, as it stammers a few lame prayers over its death-bed; and on such conditions

we may reconeile the two contending opinions. But don't tell us that God requires that favourite desire to be mortified, that growing habit to be mastered, or those old streams of affection, reverence, humility, and faith in unseen things, whose very fountains have been so long sealed in us, to flow again with all the freshness of a spiritual childhood. You ask a hard thing of us; or rather, you propose to us a happiness which we can never have, unless it come to us as a gift. To others perhaps God has given to be great in the kingdom of heaven; but we are little; leave us, then, humble in our littleness."

Some such answer, I suppose, of *EVASION*, whether sneering, or doubtful, or despondent, the greater part of our Israel of to-day would return to any one coming in the spirit and the power of Elijah. Some excuse for halting a little longer is the response, which the more sluggish side of our mind puts in opposition to the more daring hope, which comes over us in some hour of happier aspiration. So St Augustine prayed when young that he might come to love God thereafter, but that he might be allowed to love things earthly first. So Solomon thought in his heart to give himself unto pleasure, yet acquainting himself with wisdom. So the Pharisees mocked, when Christ told them they could not love God and unjust gain. For the greediness of man would fain combine things incompatible; acknowledge the good so as to benefit by it, yet defile himself with the evil, until it removes him farther from what is good or holy day by day.

Who shall persuade us to halt no longer on the



confines between life and death? Were it not far better to escape the certainty of confession, *Vanity*, &c., the possibility of remorse too late, when "they shall call, saith the Lord, and I will not hear"? Were it not better to lay the sacrifice of all our heart, our soul, and our strength, upon some altar of well-doing, sacred to Almighty God, and entreat him to answer, whether He be the Lord, by sending down the fire of his heavenly grace, and so kindling our unworthy offering, until whatever is earthly in it be consumed, and whatever remains of our human nature be *transmuted* into something saintly and blessed; therefore worthier of Him, to whom we can render only of his own. Let no one doubt, that for all purposes of saving men's souls, helping our need, purifying our thoughts, and quicken our aspirations to the throne of grace, the arm of the Almighty is not shortened; his Spirit is not farther from us; the life-giving light of his countenance is as ready to descend upon our offering now as it was in the days of old. Only let us bring our best offering; that is, bring all our hearts, bring all ourselves, dedicate all our lives. Even as Hannah gave her child to the Lord, so let us entreat him to accept of us, and to change our vile natures to the likeness of his glorious nature, according to the working of that Divine power which can consume the sacrifice, change water into wine, heal the leper, and raise the spiritually dead.

Will it now be an encouragement, or the reverse, to observe the prophet himself falling somewhat from the lofty tone which he held in debate with king and people? Rather, perhaps, an encouragement. For the very

sympathy which we feel with the great nature when shaken and daunted, may teach us how truly he was of like passions with ourselves; how in the cause of his Divine Master he could glow with a strength, of which we by the same spirit may become alike partakers; and how, glancing aside at the danger which subsequently threatened him, his spirit sank, and he fled, like a common man fleeth, for his life. Bishop Hall indeed, and perhaps others, would willingly presuppose a command to flee; but it is not so written, and perhaps rather the contrary is implied. Elijah indeed is sustained on his way by the same providence which had before led him through the agency of the *Orebim*—(whether ravens or Arabians, it matters little)—and he endeavours to gather strength by drawing nearer, if possible, to the same dread Power which of old revealed itself on the rock of Sinai. Yet in this passionate pilgrimage, in which the chafed spirit required little sustenance, in the weary request to die under the juniper-tree, and in the choice of a route subsequently, we discern little trace of obedience to express command. It is not so much the prophet we now observe, as something between the fugitive and the pilgrim. Terrified at the threats of Jezebel, and despairing perhaps of the restoration of that holier law for which he strove, he at once seeks refuge in a desert, and expostulates with the Almighty, upon the very soil on which his faithfulness had been pledged. It is as if he said, “Oh, Holy Father”—or, if he knew not the Almighty yet by that name, “Oh, Thou who art the living dread of Israel, the God of our father Abraham, and the Deliverer by Moses out of Egypt, whereunto

serve all thy solemn covenants of old? Thou who didst promise to Levi the light and perfection of thy perpetual presence, that he should teach the world thy judgments, and the Church thy law; behold thine altars broken down, thy prophets slain with the sword: that promise to thy saints that thou wouldst awake as one out of sleep, is so far from being fulfilled, that I, even I only, am left; and I have in vain been jealous for the Lord of hosts, the living God."

"But what doest thou here, Elijah?" Was it altogether a pure zeal, or was there something of self-exultation, in the declining (as it were) twice to answer this question directly? He can give no account of any work to be done in Horeb, but he can complain of the apostasy of Israel. Thus many men are apt to throw a covering of zeal over some project in which motives are rather mingled, like iron and clay. We must acknowledge in Elijah here something of human infirmity. Yet it is the infirmity of a fervent spirit, a servant of God, and a lover of his country. He had far rather have been the champion and intercessor for his countrymen than act as their unsparing accuser.

Perhaps, indeed, all men conscious (as the prophet was) of a great and hallowed work assigned to them, are at times bowed to earth by a burden of loneliness. Surrounded by a mincing conventionalism, and having made playmates for their thoughts out of the dark problems of eternal destiny, they feel the fire within them burn, and know not in how many breasts there are sparks of a correspondent flame. All sorts of jealousies and necessities, some natural, but more conventional,

keep mind from touching mind, except with its outside surface. Thus St Paul finds no man likeminded. Elijah thinks that he only is left; and one of the psalmists exclaims, with something of the fervour of verse, "There is none righteous left; no, not one!"

But, blessed be God, even "those clear eyes of the seer discern not" always the secret story of the All-merciful. They see not the seven thousand who in patience and in poverty thank God daily for some such alleviation of pain or want as we should account a hardship. They know not what quiet and resolute performance of duty lurks under some dull and unpretending exterior. They have not allowed for the simplicity of that faith, which in many a village-church cherishes to old age the form of sound words which it heard from its infancy; which gathers its children where its fathers prayed: unskilled, perhaps, in many a controversial distinction, and liable to be puzzled by any Royal Commissioner who might set his legal wit against its unsuspecting sense; yet knowing that God has revealed himself in Christ as a just God and a Saviour, and striving by many a homely virtue to adorn the doctrine of Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us from our sins, making us thereby inheritors of eternal life. Again, they have not considered, how often in the worst part of those overgrown cities, whose mingled ignorance and profligacy are often described in such frightful terms, the grace of God vindicates itself by preserving honesty and innocence in close contact with temptation and the grossest immorality; so that, of all things the most difficult, the touching pitch and not

being defiled, is achieved, where, hard by the dwelling of prosperous vice, the struggling artisan still brings up his children in the fear of the Lord.

Be it our hope, and our prayer;—and in praying, let us be reminded of our duty to strive, that there may ever be among us many a seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to whatever makes men aliens from the holiness of God the Father, or the good will which his only-begotten Son came preaching upon earth. Only, whether they are many or few, we are intended to labour in their ranks, and if possible to increase their number. So that the question is, by way of emphasis, repeated twice, “What doest thou here, Elijah?”

Perhaps we may change the mood of the adverb, from one of place to one of temper. It may be not only, What doest thou here; but what doest thou in this frame of mind? If God has thrown upon any man only a fragment of Elijah’s mantle, what should he do in that mood of despondency? Has our heavenly Father given a blessing in order only to add a curse to it? or is not whatever talent he has entrusted to us, if only we use it faithfully, a pledge that He will give us abundantly more? We need not sit mourning in the cave, but go forth into the fresh air, with which the compassions of God fail not to surround us day by day. If He sends us, that is, if He really sends us on a journey of his own work, and if we are not pretending the Lord hath sent (when our love of lucre or ease hath sent us), He will enable us to go in the strength of whatever meat He provides us. If He gives a command, He will give also power. If He takes away the lawfulness of a thing, either

by express command, or decency, He can also take away the desire. He can enable us, by a keen sense of the magnitude of the eternal interests which surround us, to take comparatively little thought whether we abound or whether we want. In proportion, then, as any one hopes he has the spirit of Elijah, that is, of a servant of the living God, he should be ashamed of all doubting, fearing, desponding. We have one on our side, stronger than the strong, and whose strength is made perfect in our weakness.

But again, if any man's wandering steps have led him, not to any mountain of passionate contemplation, but to some far country of forgetfulness or presumption, still greater need has he to apply to himself the question of our text. What doest thou here, he may ask his own soul, of whatever work had been assigned thee, either in the vineyard, or in the market-place? What doest thou in church with so little prayerfulness of mind? or what doest thou out of it when all means of salvation called thee there? or what doest thou in that brutish rage; in those uncharitable surmises; in that servile will and that commanding lust; or in that elaborate stinginess, or in that contemptible sauntering away of life; in that egotistic uselessness before God and man, which only is not more boldly criminal, because it wants more opportunity or temptation to be so? It is no answer to say, that all around us live halting, like ourselves, between the service of our Divine Master and the worship of some popular Baal—whether ignorance or *indifferentism*. For if it be so, have not we greater cause to be very jealous for the Lord God, who has separated us from so many

of his creatures, by giving us higher conceptions of his wisdom and his mercy; but by those very conceptions has laid upon us the burden of being judged according to them. If by the coming down of his Only-begotten Son, it has pleased God to reveal how near to himself in spirit and truth and love He has deigned to bring those whom henceforward He terms children, this multiplying of our talents must greatly increase our responsibility. If we conceived aright of the near alliance thus entered into between earth and Heaven, not only would the love of God constrain us to be very jealous lest the divine and the human be again divorced, but it would teach us to be skilful and ingenious in doing his will, and in bringing others, as our fellow-heirs, to salvation. There is indeed a spirit more heavenly than that of Elijah; it is the spirit of the Apostle, who, after once coveting the power of calling fire from heaven, learnt to say, "God is Love," and, "Little children, love one another." Yet perhaps it may be doubted, especially when we consider the earlier fervour of St John, whether men in general are likely to reach his riper temper, unless they have also shared with him somewhat of the spirit of Elijah. For Christian charity is so far from being another name for indifference, that it ever requires as its condition and accompaniment a certain warmth of zeal. He is not likely to love man, where his own interests come into conflict with his neighbour's, who has not learnt to love God; nor can any one love God truly, without also feeling a reverential jealousy for his name, his house, his church, and all things that belong to his service. Yet most of all, brethren, undoubtedly,

the sight of his natural likeness, the image of God in man, degraded by ignorance and defiled by sin, until in the lower forms of humanity it is little better than the beasts that perish, should touch any man, who would be numbered either with Elijah or St John, with a godly jealousy on part of the Creator and Saviour of mankind, and a great desire to do something in our generation, that the beneficent designs of Heaven may not be marred and counteracted on earth.

But lastly, what I say unto one, I say unto all. There may be some in every congregation who are neither priests nor prophets, nor sons of prophets; and who perhaps pride themselves that it is so. Without here inquiring how far they lose thereby a chance of being great in the kingdom of Heaven (since it is they who forsake something for the sake of Christ to whom He promises the higher places in his kingdom), it may at least be suggested to them, that every human being has some part on earth, assigned by God, the great Master of the scenes. That part may have either been arranged by his providence, or it may be pointed out by his spiritual grace. It behoves them every one to consider, "What is the place allotted me by that good Spirit which worketh all in all? With that place, whatever it is, let me be thankfully contented, and may God increase in me his grace, that I may render true account of whatever is committed to my trust. In whatever place, or hour, or mood, this great idea of my personal duty, and my responsibility to the Judge of the whole earth, is in danger of fading from my mind, may some faithful voice, or some higher than any human teacher, revive it with



the words, "What doest thou here?" There may be a certain emphasis in the "Elijah;" but to every immortal soul the question belongs, "What doest thou? woe, if idle."

Now perhaps every one can best make minute application for themselves,—only pray remember to apply the words in some way; and that way, if possible, not to your neighbour. Let the finger of imagination write some such a scroll as *What doest thou here?* on the walls of your secret chamber, and wave it before you as a flaming sword whenever your footstep is trembling on the threshold of any unhallowed ground. May it brace the nerves of your mind in some listless hour; sober you in some dubious, and perhaps desecrating company; possibly rouse you from querulous criticism of your country, your race, or your church, to the doing of whatever God has given you to do; which therefore He, not being like Pharaoh, moment by moment gives you strength to perform. Such power, my brethren, these words of Holy Scripture will have, if you let them represent to you, as they well may, the eye that never slumbers, the faithfulness that never leaves unhelped any true servant of God, and the account which every man must render of what he has done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

LAMPETER, *October 3, 1852.*

## SERMON VI.

### OFFERING TO GOD.

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*I will not offer burnt-offerings to the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. 2 Samuel xxiv. 24.*

How inadequate must be our highest conceptions of the Almighty, is most keenly felt by the wisest of mankind. Yet we see, from the example of the sacred writers, how natural it is to picture to ourselves the King eternal and invisible with something (as it were) of the attributes of earthly sovereignty. We imagine, seated upon a throne, Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; we ascribe garments as bright as snow, and hair like white wool, to Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who has declared there is nothing to which He can be likened: we say that a sharp sword proceeds out of his mouth, though his sword is the word of wisdom; we call his eyes fiery flame, though to Him all space is as an eye, and omnipresent thought is sight; nor does our imagination fail, in like manner, to invest with bodily form the winged thousands who minister to Him, and the ten thousand times ten thousand who stand before Him; though we know that He maketh the wind which bloweth where it listeth his angel, and the

fire which flashes through heaven the minister of his word.

Verily, brethren, wind and vapour, storm and hail, fulfil in turn the high behests of the Almighty. War and famine and pestilence, as well as peace and plenty, and every capacity of social enlightenment, have in turn their tasks to perform. He says to disease, Go, and it goeth; and to the souls which He had breathed throughout a populous generation, Come, and lo, they return again to their mysterious Giver.

It is a part of our faith, that for all purposes necessary to our salvation the Only-begotten Son hath declared unto us the eternal Father. Still, for all that range of questions which mere curiosity would raise, in reference to the mysterious being of the Divine Majesty, it is for the generations to come as true as it was of old, "No man hath seen the Father at any time." Nor, probably, will it be deemed either absurd or wrong to say, that much of the obscurity which envelopes the eternal throne surrounds also the Cherubim and Seraphim, and all that host of Heaven which we picture to ourselves as waiting upon the great King, like the eyes of a servant wait upon the eyes of a master, and as ever and anon exclaiming, Holy! Holy! Holy!

So long, however, as such thoughts are kept within the range of devotional feeling, and not suffered either to become controversially positive, or to degenerate into superstitious imaginations, we need not be careful to dispute, whether more or less of distinctness should be assigned to the embodiment of those high agencies, by which the only wise God worketh out his pleasure,

either in earth or heaven. There is something more vivid, and (as it were) powerful to sustain our spirits, in that freshness of contact with things of the unseen world, which, by giving them bodily shape, renders them not merely present to the heart, but makes them pass as it were before the eyes, and speak in the ears, of the imagination. Even now, scarcely less than to our childhood's gaze, the angel of the Lord, by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite, appears not so much the disembodied pestilence ceasing to slay, as some gigantic mower leaning upon his scythe, with heaving chest and swollen brow, while the dead lie fallen around him, and he hears gladly, as some reaper in harvest-time, the relenting command of his Master, "It is enough, stay *now* thy hand."

Well, indeed, might it seem enough: for within three days seventy thousand lives had been gathered by that stern reaper. Within so short a time must the day of repentance, or the final despair, of so many immortal beings have been brought to its end; and either the gathering into the garner allotted, or else the remorse which dieth not, and the thirst which is not quenched for ever. It is true, brethren, the same momentous question is decided every day for our neighbours, or for ourselves, and we little regard it. A less period than three days is the crisis in many a man's life; he grows in grace, or he rejects it; he contracts the disease of body, or the habit of mind, which is pregnant, like an evil mother, with a long train of irrevocable consequences; and, as day by day we proceed a few inches of that mysterious road, which diverges on the one hand to life,

and on the other to spiritual death, so, in some one day of our lives we reach that critical point at which there is no longer much likelihood of our turning back; and our doom, though unknown to ourselves, is morally fixed, in the eye of any heart-searching observer, for ever and for ever. Thus in far less than three days the awful question may be settled, for many thousands of human beings, whether they shall go away into the outer darkness, or enter with Christ and all his holy angels into life eternal. How many men we meet, on a fair day, or in a crowded market-place, without reflecting how great an issue may be finally settled for them on that day, and who perhaps little think of it themselves! yet probably, if we had been present at the falling of the seventy thousand in three days, the visible concentration of the blow into so short a period would have arrested our most careless thoughts. Not that, really, so many deaths would have been more awful than the same number of lives. Death is but the full-grown harvest: and the growing crop of life, being destined to so great an end, and as yet more fertile in all possible contingencies, is at least equally sacred, and a thing equally full of awe. Still, I say it is probable that the visible fall of so many thousands would have made a more vivid impression on our minds. It is not impossible that David himself may then have doubted whether he had made a prudent choice. For he had said, "Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord." But he found, that, terrible as it is to fall into the hands of misjudging and unmerciful men, it is also a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the ignorance of man is cruel, the

knowledge of God is awful. He knows who has been partaker of any national crime, and who has protested against it, either audibly, or by silently standing aloof. He knows who has had pleasure in them that do evil, accommodating his conscience to their standard, and who has shared in the earnest groaning of human aspiration to be delivered from the bondage of imperfection. He knows what things have been done by every man's fireside; who by intemperance, or self-neglect, has become apt to imbibe the seeds of contagion; who is a sufferer, so that death will be a relief to him; who is a sinner, so that life is no longer deserved by him; who longs for rest after weariness; and who has provoked the necessity of being cut off, as a warning: in short, the Lord of the harvest knows who is ripe for the reaper, or what barren tree must no longer cumber the ground. Thus He knows how to reconcile what is fitting for us one by one, with the general judgment, in which the nation is involved. He knows also whom to spare, and where to stay; on what house there is a sacrificial sprinkling, from whatever holiest oblation its dwellers could offer or recall; and from what parish goes up the hearty prayer, "Give peace in our time, O Lord,"—so that there the angel, with quicker step, may carry past his idle scythe: He knows too, even the Lord God most merciful, the hour for saying, "It is enough, hold now thy hand."

Notwithstanding the grievous faults of king David, he never altogether loses a certain magnanimity of character. Thus we find him exclaiming, in natural emotion, "What have these sheep done; let thine anger be against me, and against my father's house." We

may therefore readily conceive with what satisfaction he must have found the plague stayed from his people, after it had reached the threshing-floor of Araunah. We can enter also into the feeling which prompts him readily to obey the injunction by which he is directed to raise an altar and to offer sacrifice unto the Lord, although, indeed, some modern divines would, from a misconception which comes of an exaggeration of a truth, almost have blamed such an act as unnecessary, or even superstitious. "For what can be the value" (they would ask) of any human sacrifice? Is not the plague already stayed? Why should we lessen the freedom of the great deliverance already wrought? The angel has already been arrested by the voice, Stay now thy hand. There is therefore no longer any rational end to be attained by sacrifices."

Some such arguments, it is not impossible, many persons in our own time would address to king David: or at least would only be restrained from doing so, because they might perhaps observe, that Gad, the seer, had especially directed the sacrifice in question. But, surely, we need not be so inconsiderate as to suppose, that either Almighty God, or his true servants, give directions which are without a reason. There must have been some reason, or some permanent principle concerned, and probably a principle of universal application, which made Gad enjoin a sacrifice, and the king not only ready to perform it, but desirous that it should cost him something. To the discovery or the illustration of that principle I shall devote the short remainder of the present sermon.

Under the impulse of *what* feeling, shall we say, that king David refused the offer of Araunah to give him his oxen and threshing-floor, and exclaimed, "I will not offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing"? What David's inner feeling was, my brethren, the patriarchal father, and the type of all believers, knew, when he would not withhold from God his son, even his only son Isaac, whom he loved. Even so Matthew the publican knew it, when at the Saviour's call he arose, and left all, and followed him who was rejected of men. Mary also the well beloved, whether of Magdala or of Bethany, knew it, when by her gift, which the utilitarian criticised, and the unloving scoffed at, she won that blessing from the Son of God; "Let her alone; she hath done what she could." But among these who knew the secret, we read also of one who emphatically knew it not. It is that young man whom Jesus indeed loved, but who lacked one thing; he could admire the Saviour, and believe in his goodness, and praise him; but he could not give up any thing dear for his sake; therefore he went away sorrowful. For he knew not the deep necessity, which all the others felt, that wherever the heart has been placed, there it must also carry whatever it has to give most precious. There is no climate or country in which strong feeling is not instinctively expected to act thus—or in which to give presents has not been reckoned a natural sign of affection. Neither is there any extreme of liberality, or even extravagance, to which, under the pressing sway of some dominant idea, men of all tempers, both individually and in masses, may not find



themselves urged, by an impulse, alike of instinct and of contagion. We see this principle in men of the world, as well as in the more earnest class of Christians. Our great statesmen have generally died poor. The scholar seldom grudges the price of his books. The author frequently feels, that, so far from gaining a lucrative livelihood, he not only sacrifices that, but even dries the fountains of life, for the remote chance of becoming famous, or of benefiting mankind. It is obvious that I do not allude to childish and unthinking extravagance, but to that deep passion which deliberately sacrifices the less for the sake of the greater, or as a sort of libation upon its attainment. Thus we find, in any of the rare instances (for they must be rare) in which the kingdom of heaven has become as engrossing an object to a man as the family or the ordinary employments of life are generally, there this keener and diviner love counts no more its earthly treasures, or counts them only as things to be cast at the feet of its Saviour, or employed in the service of its God. This idea has often been applied, and surely with great propriety, to the building of churches, the endowment of schools or almshouses, and other such good works, which belong either to the embellishment of a country, or to the edification of the city of God.

But this morning, brethren, neither the rearing of those solemn minsters, which attest that their builders dreamt of no perishable home hereafter, nor any measurement of Christian love, by the outward and visible sacrament of charitable acts, are suggested as the direction for your thoughts,—so much as that deep consolation, which we may draw, in all distress of mind,

body, or estate, from this idea of offering to God out of that which has cost us something.

It has pleased our heavenly Father, who doeth all things well, to lay upon every one of his children a burthen; and how heavy a one upon some, none, save the sufferer, can tell. How many things appear, by the very constitution of the world, to have been almost necessaries to our happiness; and yet how many of them are denied to a large portion of mankind! We hardly know ourselves, except by imagination, the pain of wanting food; of being maddened by cold, with insufficient clothing; or of sickness, for all which medicine can do is to prescribe some remedy far beyond the means of the sufferer.—Yet which of us has not known either sickness, disappointment, or anxiety? who has not felt the irksomeness of some recurring duty, the jar of nerves overwrought, or the blank and listless hour? Probably no one is without his burthen in some shape: no, not one. For all experience proclaims, that certainly no exemption is furnished by wealth; certainly none by knowledge; and none, except for a time, in that miserably dull selfishness, which tries to escape feeling by torpor, but is destined to its day of reckoning. Perhaps the very exuberance of health, or of friends and pleasant associations, may have rendered it difficult for us to live soberly; and we had set our minds too much on some idol of outward things: God sweeps them away from us, either slowly, or with a stroke. We were wrapt up in the sympathy of friends; either some fatal misunderstanding occurs, or death interposes that barrier, across which no strength of merely human faculties has ever

yet attained an answer. Again, our natural disposition was inclined to nothing so much as ease, or thoughtful leisure: God takes us up, and casts us (where we little foresaw it) amidst bitterness and strife of tongues. We were perhaps somewhat sensitive, or timidly careful of our reputation; he suffers us to learn the taste of every unjust aspersion, and studied inuendo. We had determined, that facility of temper, and complaisance of manner, were the means of passing through life agreeably; we find ourselves in a position, where a wholesome sternness, and the power of saying *No* almost harshly, become the first requirements of duty. But whatever we are, and wherever our lot may be cast, to do something, to suffer something, to deny ourselves and others something, to fight in short a good fight, by patience, by vigilance, by soberness, are certain to be the tests of our faith, and the requisites of our allegiance, as soldiers of the cross of Christ. In our vigour, action; in our weakness, patience; in all our lives long, counting ourselves not our own, but the servants of Him who gave himself for us. So emphatically is this our portion, that whoever endures nothing, whoever is not struggling in some way to do or bear something, seems to have turned aside from bearing his portion with that Master upon whom (as he went up Calvary) they laid his cross, and the weight bowed Him to the earth.

But in all such things, brethren, whether labour, sickness, or uneasiness of mind, there are chiefly two consolations. The first, from the necessity of things, is by no means contemptible; but the second, which is from the love of God constraining us, is far better.

Undoubtedly it *is something* to be *assured* that we cannot straighten what God has made crooked. It is useless to kick against the goad, like an unruly ox, or like a wild beast in a cage. But it is far more consolatory to believe that our heavenly Father accepts the patience with which we bear some sad disappointment, our meekness under some stroke of his hand, or our sober perseverance amidst irksome duties and embarrassing temptations, with that same eternal compassion which of old counted the blood of his saints precious, and in the sight of which the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is one of great price.

We know—for all mankind instinctively acknowledge the fact—and our church reminds us of it, in the most holy and venerable portion of her Liturgy, that we are not of ourselves worthy to offer unto God any sacrifice. But let no man take away from our religion that principle of giving to God the heart, and all things which the heart most fondly values; or that idea of postponing all other things to the pearl of great price, which as it makes men great on earth by the energy and unity of purpose which it inspires, so probably it also makes great in the kingdom of heaven. Still less, my brethren, let any man rob us of that lively incitement to ever fresh and manly exertion, that encouragement, when all mankind frown upon us, and that abundant consolation, in our deepest distress of body or of mind, which is derived from the ancient idea, that God of his all fatherly compassion is graciously pleased to accept the offering of our souls; He puts our tears, as it were, in his bottle; He says to us, as for his sake we bear suffering, or for-

bear, being injured, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

In short, whatever we do or endure, upon principle, because our conscience tells us it is right, or because the love of God constrains us, and because we have determined to offer before him of the travail of our souls, is an oblation, like that of David; for it is *not* offered to the Lord our God out of that which has cost us nothing.

Lastly, if our work, or our endurance, be done truly in that spirit, it is also an oblation in the spirit of one greater than David; even of that Son whom David called his Lord. He indeed gave of his own, and we only of that which he first enables us to give. But this is verily and indeed "partaking of Christ," when by daily perseverance in well-doing we fill up in ourselves that in which we have hitherto come short of the devoted life of Christ. Nor can there ever be a better opportunity for thus righting what is wrong in ourselves, than when we are invited, in words full of comfort and of blessing, to remember the sacrifice of that Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Like in that grand Psalm (50th) in which Jehovah calls to all the holy people who were in covenant with him, so his words call to you to-day; "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High; and call upon Him in the day of trouble; He will deliver thee, and thou shalt praise Him."

Hear also St Paul beseeching you, not by the terrors, but by the great mercies of God, that you would not honor Him with that which has cost you naught; but

bring your whole hearts, your lives, yourselves, as the living sacrifice to do his will, and to accept henceforward whatever portion He shall assign you. Blessed be his name, the God of all consolation, who comforts us even in our sorest distress, by enabling us then to offer before his throne something which has cost us much, even our pain, our patience, our secret groanings, our entire bowing down in the dread, yet strangely-comforting thought, Oh Father, not our will, but thine be done. Such comfort has almost a sad sound; even as, Take up thy cross, or, Go and suffer something for me, is not so flattering an invitation, as Come and reign, or, Thou shalt sit on my right hand and my left. Yet whoever makes experience of thus giving himself freely and without reserve to God, for Christ's sake, even as Christ freely gave himself for us, will find a blessedness of peace which the world cannot give or take away. Take we, then, brethren, this yoke upon us, for it is easy; and the burthen of Christ, for we shall find it light.

LAMPETER, *Midlent*, March 6, 1853.

## SERMON VII.

### *DEBORAH'S SONG.*

*Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,  
Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel. Judges v. 1, 2.*

A CERTAIN kind of sacredness appears ever to have been stamped by the Almighty upon the several sentiments which were necessary to preserve either the family or the state. That the parent indeed should cherish the child, was a provision so amply involved in the gentle teaching of nature, as to require no written commandment. But that the child in turn should honour and reverence the parent, was at the same time suggested by nature and reason, and also embodied in those ten fundamental precepts, which formed the essential characteristic of the law given by Moses on Mount Sinai. From such a reverence of our fathers the sentiment of love to our fatherland is so natural an offshoot, as to appear but a slight extension of it. No nation has been found to which the Divine wisdom ever revealed itself in even the dimmest degree and obscurest fashion, without some recognition of the sentiment, that a man's country has a claim alike on his services and on his affection. "We are not born merely for ourselves," said

all the noble spirits among the Gentiles; nor does the circle of our duty end with our immediate family, but embraces those whom God has bound to us by the ties of neighbourhood, citizenship, and national law.

Among the Israelites the same feeling shews itself in so earnest and devoted a form, that it is not always easy to distinguish how far some of the glowing expressions of psalmist and prophet should be ascribed mainly to the inspiration of patriotism or to that of religion. The Sion, of which her children grieve to see the stones in the dust, is at once the city which their fathers built, and the spot where the sanctuary of Jehovah stands. To dwell in the land is the inheritance of the pious, and to be cut off from it the portion of the wicked. Scarcely is any wish thought more worthy of being cherished by the saintly patriot than that he may see Jerusalem in prosperity all his life long.

Now it will be readily allowed, that whatever draws a man out of the narrow will of his own selfish desires, is in itself so far good. But supposing, again, a sentiment which has been so far useful, takes up its range at but a short distance from the man, and refuses to be carried farther, it may become in its turn not a means of widening the sympathies, but a mode of narrowing them. We can easily imagine cases, or our memory may supply us with them, in which the feeling of attachment to a particular country has been so intense, as to overrule the universal obligations of good faith, justice, and truth. Nor ought it to surprise us if in the earlier stages of the world's history we find such a sentiment existing in its ruder forms. It may have glowed in



men's breasts so effectively as to perform all the work of which our Maker intended it to be the instrument, giving a stimulus to valour, and a bond of union to societies; yet have been guilty in its kind of some excesses, which a more enlightened humanity than that of the age would have been required duly to correct.

The very circumstance, indeed, of the sentiment to which we allude, being a natural sentiment, might prepare us to expect some excess in its ruder manifestations. It would seem a province destined for the gradual progress of mankind, to suggest one after another checks and limitations on feelings acknowledged to be natural. And, as this process might on the whole be step by step, so if at any time it should please Almighty God to teach his rational creatures in any more signal and remarkable manner, constituting thereby an epoch in the history of mankind, we should then expect the corrections to be supplied which the ruder capacities of nature might require. We did not want a new revelation to teach us that our nature possessed certain instincts; but we do appear to have needed some emphatical caution (or some warning from no less authoritative voice than that of our Maker), against the abuses into which an unrestrained indulgence of those instincts might hurry us unawares. Hence, when the Only-begotten Son of God came teaching mankind the way of peace, He deemed it unnecessary to recommend men the love of their own country; He says nothing of selecting one person rather than another for the more tender offices of friendship; and it is only on a special occasion, with reference to a particular abuse, that He reminds men of the primary duties of honouring

their father and their mother. The points on which stress is laid in the Gospel of Christ, are rather the fitness of doing justly by all, loving mercy to all, and speaking truth to all, as well as walking humbly with our God. The great idea of Christian charity becomes an extension, as far as possible, to all mankind, of the same general principles of justice and benevolence which had formerly been narrowed by their restriction to a country or a race. Do good unto all men; be kindly affectioned; speak the truth, or lie not; seeing that we are members one of another. In Christ Jesus there is neither barbarian nor Saxon, bond nor free.

So that henceforward, though we may love our country, as we may honour our parents, it must still be remembered that other countries have their rights, just as other men's parents ought not to be injured by us.

The natural instinct may be cherished so far as to effect its legitimate work, but must still submit to limitations, drawn from the principles of justice and mercy, as well as from the universal brotherhood of mankind. For, "have we not all one Lord and Father? why deal we then treacherously every man with his neighbour?"

Now it is up to a standard of this kind that we find the conceptions of men are gradually growing throughout the Old Testament. We must not be surprised that in the earlier stages they have not reached it. If indeed, as some people appear to expect, the contemporaries of Moses and Joshua had been as refined in their tone of moral sentiment as the contemporaries of Malachi, or those of John the Baptist, then the whole history of the Old Testament would have been useless. Nay, it would

have been unnecessary. Whereas, in the earlier times we undoubtedly find a certain harshness, which is quite consistent with the general facts of human nature, and with the circumstance of the Hebrew people having been made the subject of a higher teaching, but would not at all consist with the idea that all their actions are precedents for us to imitate, or even objects for us to admire.

Whenever, then, we endeavour to weigh narratives of the kind alluded to, our path seems to be between two dangers. On the one hand, we ought not hastily to condemn such as Deborah, Jephthah, and David, because the standard of their age and country is a rude one; nor, again, should we let down to their level the far higher standard of sentiment to which the good providence of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has brought his children in the fulness of time. We should neither do injustice to the old, nor yet desire to go back to it from the new. Surely it is not without a sickening of the heart that any right-minded person can hear some atrocious deed elaborately defended, or even propounded as an act of *faith*, because it happen to be recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Nor again, are we warranted in supposing that actions, otherwise wrong, were rendered right by any special command of the Most High, unless some trace of such command appear to be distinctly recorded. Rather, indeed, we should be careful to preserve the fine edge of our conscience unturned, and its perceptions keen. We may well admire the fidelity on part of the sacred historian, which has led him to write down good and bad with the same

unfaltering pen; and moreover, however some persons may suppose that purer examples of moral virtue than are found in the Old Testament would have been more appropriate themes for general instruction, such pure examples would at least have fallen short in one material point: namely, in the fidelity which represents the face of nature as it exists. It is well known that the nations between the Tigris and the Mediterranean have never abstained in their warfare from either treachery or bloodshed: suppose, then, we read in the Book of Judges, that Syrian shepherds, twelve centuries before Christ, were gentle, and upright lovers of truth, it would have been a reasonable question, where the originals existed from which so fair a picture was drawn. But as the case stands, we only require in reason to be reminded, that we are reading of human nature in one of its least refined stages of development, that the country is the East, that the age (of Deborah for example) is at least as early as the war before Troy; and that when men in that age were animated by a general idea that their cause (as they conceived it) was a sacred one, they did not scruple to ascribe every turn in its conduct, and much more its results, to the direct agency of the Almighty.

When, for example, any one would enter truly into the spirit of the song of Deborah, let him remember, that for twenty years the children of Israel had been mightily oppressed by a king whose nine hundred chariots were of iron. The outburst of passion, in a people of slaves scarce escaped from bondage, can never be other than fierce. The highways had been untrodden—

the villages had drooped in the silence of decay—the places of drawing water were beset by the bow of the oppressor, and not a shield or spear was seen moved on part of the down-stricken people, until,—as the strong-minded woman by whose spirit they were at length roused, expresses it with pardonable exultation,—“until that I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel.” In every verse of the song in which she utters forth her triumph, we see the woman, the patriot, and the bard. It has been often remarked, that the gentler of the two sexes is also the least apt to discriminate to what length they may legitimately go, in adherence to any side on which their affections happen to be enlisted. Even so Deborah seems to ask only the question, Were not the people of Israel oppressed? was not Sisera their oppressor? No light censure, then, she deems should fall on those who stayed their hands from giving rescue in the hour of need. For the divisions, which kept back Reuben from the field, there were great searchings of heart. As for them of Meroz, who helped not the people of the Lord in their sore conflict, it seems as if she, the messenger raised up by the Lord, has a right to curse them: possibly even to her rapt imagination, the powers of the unseen world may seem ready to ratify the verdict, which the agony of a trampled people is ever ready to pronounce against the slow of counsel and timid of heart,—against the self-seeker, in short, who stays to count the mighty arrayed against them, and comes not to help that cause which seems the cause of the Lord.

How different were the men of Zebulun and Naphtali! They shrank not from their country's cause, they

jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. So ought it to have been with all the twelve tribes, before whom God had driven out the Canaanite of old. Even the powers of nature seemed to sympathise with such an effort. The very stars in their courses smiled more kindly upon the patriot ranks arrayed against Sisera. The river of Kishon, already famous in story, became a minister to carry away the dead in its swollen course. Is not Jehovah the Lord of hosts? He has enabled Barak to lead captivity captive, so that they who handle the pen of the writer in Zebulun have now a subject to celebrate for ever.

Where is then the fury of the oppressor? What has become of the vaunting of him who arrayed his nine hundred chariots in the plain? So perish all thine enemies, O Lord!

Truly, brethren, it was not without reason they of old time made little difference between the prophet and the poet, the bard and the seer. Which of the two characters ought we more to recognise, in that language of exultation over the fall of Sisera, and that approval of the crime of Jael? Possibly, in a measure, we may say both. It may be the spirit of the prophetess which recognises the Lord God of Israel as the setter up of one, and the easter down of another, tracing ultimately the disposal of all events to the Divine will: but it may be only the leader of Israel's armies, and the songstress of Israel's triumph, that can presume to call Jael the wife of Heber, "blessed among women."—Kindling in the fierce flush of victory, and borne along by a genius whose chariot-wheels grow hot as they drive, the

Amazonian prophetess cannot stay to behold in Sisera, the fugitive, the weary, the sleeping guest; she condescends only to contemplate him as the enemy of her race, the oppressor fallen, the desolator desolate. To have harboured him as a friend, would have been, from the point of view from which she regards the subject, to harbour the enemy of Israel; whereas to smite him, even with circumstances of treacherous cruelty, was in her mind's eye only smiting one already doomed of the Lord. Of course, if you choose to turn such a sentiment into a formal doctrine, you must from a humane point of view utterly condemn it; but I do not think it necessary, either to justify or to condemn; considering it only in reference to the time of the speaker, the provocation which her people had received, and the patriotic glow with which her fervid spirit bursts into song.

Precisely of the same kind is the real key to the passage lower down, about the mother of Sisera. Many persons read the verses as if they narrated prosaically an historical event of the mother of Sisera putting her head (as Jezebel does elsewhere) out of a particular window. Hence Mr Thomas Scott is pleased to found upon the 30th verse, a complaint of the wickedness of Sisera's mother, and some advice to parents, to form better wishes for their children. But, if a person professes to interpret Scripture, he ought to give a fair interpretation of it; even at the expense of setting moral reflections for a moment aside. Nothing can be clearer, than that the Hebrew song of triumph dwells only with dramatic vividness of representation on such circumstances as might be supposed likely to have

happened, so far as their supposition might enhance the sense of victory, and impress either speaker or hearer with a keener sense of the great deliverance which had been achieved. Had Sisera set out conquering; and did his friends conceive him destined to conquer? Had they already in imagination divided the spoils? If they had, the event taught them a bitter lesson, that he who girdeth on his harness should not boast himself as he that putteth it off. He came as a spoiler, but the God of Israel destined him to be spoiled. Such is the sentiment, which if you put, not in a didactic form, but in the most vivid manner of lyrical poetry, you will have exactly, what Deborah says in her imagination of the mother of Sisera. Place yourself in her position, and you will enter more fully into the spirit of her words, than with the aid of Mr Scott's Commentary.

What sort of moral, then, are we to draw from the whole? Something perhaps of this kind:—The oppressor and the wrong-doer may be overtaken by a downfall when they think themselves most secure. That retribution (which, though wrought out by human passions, is yet not without the overruling sway of the great governor of the world,) may be rapid beyond what their power could have expected, and unrelenting in proportion to the fierceness of the recoil which they have provoked.

Neither is this general idea true only of political tyranny. It applies no less to all manner of negligence, supineness, and forgetfulness of duty either to God, or man. The pitcher goes often to the well, and is broken at last. The Lord awakes, as it were, suddenly, as out of sleep, and like a giant refreshed with wine. Our



poverty comes upon us like an armed man. Our sin finds us out in a single day. We lie down in a false security, and rise up in terror and despair. Even so, the great change of life and death is apt to come as a thief in the night.

But again; we see, not only in the history of Sisera, but in many other narratives throughout the Old Testament, a certain grand process being carried on by the agency of persons, whose motives, or whose moral standard, we must often admit to fall far short of perfection. They evidently knew but in part to what sort of result their struggles were tending. The Israel for which they fought was indeed their country; and their national church was the temple of Jehovah. But it evidently had not entered the conceptions of Joshua or Deborah, that the time should come when the whole family of mankind would be recognised as standing in the same relation of an elect and a well-beloved people, to the God of the ends of the whole earth, as then appeared the exclusive property of the twelve tribes in Canaan. Exactly correspondent with this <sup>1</sup>narrowness of their horizon in respect of the filial relation to God, was also their conception of the moral virtues to be exercised, not only to a man's kinsman and his neighbour, but to his fellow-creature, although his foe.

Still the great design of the Almighty and All-wise went on developing itself, like the small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which was destined to fer-

<sup>1</sup> The language now used by some on questions of Race, grounded as it often is on falsehood, and persuasive to wrong, is quite as reprehensible, and is a relapse from Christianity.

tilize the land with rain. He was using men of imperfect views as his instruments; and by means of them was educating the world. He had long ago, indeed, implanted in mankind certain germs and capacities of nobler things. But these were so tangled and stifled, that they required training by no less hand than his own. The blind or servile fear of some dread unseen power was to become childlike reverence; a zeal without knowledge was to become intelligent piety; patriotism was to expand itself into benevolence and justice; and faith to grow up into the love of God and man. As to the rest prepared for the people of Jehovah, the ever-being God, it was ultimately to show itself beyond the grave; the warfare by which it was to be attained was not against the Canaanites, but against all the forms of moral evil, and vicious contamination; while our companions and fellow-soldiers in this fair struggle were to be not only Barak and his tribesmen, but all the purer and nobler spirits from the East and the West, even a multitude which no man can number, being many of them known to the grace of God, even as Cyrus was of old known to his providence, though haply they may not have known him under his Hebrew name Jehovah.

Therefore God, I say, brethren, has been educating mankind. He threw into the hearts of men certain sentiments, which, though mingled with tares, were yet destined to spring up and bear fruit. Generation after generation worshipped, either at Shiloh, or Hebron, or in the temple at Jerusalem, knowing the Lord only as the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel. But the very power of those solemn services, and of those meditations

on the majesty, the justice, and the mercy of the Father of the spirits of all flesh, which solemn psalm and prophecy and law awakened, was also to develope a larger idea of the extent of the divine compassion, and some conception of the justice, which the Judge of the whole earth must, in doing right, extend to all mankind. Hence we find in Isaiah and in the Psalms no mean anticipation of the truth which it was reserved for our divine Saviour to proclaim in all its power; that God is not a God of the Jew only, but also a God of the Gentile. Neither is He so much pleased with his title, the Lord of hosts, as with his higher name, as the Father of all consolation. Nor again is it his principal attribute, to be jealous; for *God is love*. Nor is He to be worshipped only at Jerusalem; for God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth. Let no one therefore think that God is pleased with any sort of treachery; for as He is not deceived, neither doth He deceive any man. Nor yet hath He so much pleasure in sacrifice as He hath in mercy.

If then we are to call any one blessed among women, let it be no longer Jael the wife of Heber, but rather Mary the virgin mother of the Prince of Peace. Comparing indeed her hymn, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," with that of Deborah, we comprehend in a glance the entire distinction between the New Testament and the Old. Again, if we would be patriotic, let us remember that other nations have their rights; and amongst their rights may be numbered, speaking truth of their character, doing justice to their motives, respecting their manners, their traditions, their faith. If we saw the

plaintive elegy, which perhaps the mother of Sisera may have uttered over her son, it might possibly win a tear from us, even fresh from Deborah's song.

But, on the whole, God works out his own ends. Let us neither irreverently slander, nor seoff at the past; nor yet need we blindly worship it. The Almighty and All-wise has himself taught us at sundry times and in diverse manners, but especially by his only-begotten Son, to rise alike above the manners and the sentiments which are painted in the book of Judges with so lively a pencil. Yet He has nowhere taught us to trample irreverently on the tomb of religious antiquity, any more than human instinct would lead some great conqueror or successful statesman to sneer at the humble cottage where perhaps his father first drew breath. Peradventure the time may come, at least in heaven, when much of what we now believe may appear to those, for whom God has reserved some better thing, as much type, as much parable, as much shadow, as the belief of the Jews of old now appears to ourselves. For it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*. Peradventure then, I say, God is now leading us to heaven by a route, which may hereafter appear to us as strange, and as merely typical, as that of the Israelites through the wilderness on their way to Canaan. Only some things, we know, can never pass away; for the word of the Lord in its highest spirit abideth for ever. To him, our first Father and our great Teacher, be all grateful worship rendered for the many lessons He has hitherto in diverse manners given to his creatures. To him be praise for our instincts, our capacities, our feelings, our reason,

our conscience, our affections; nay, even for our wants, our fears, and our sorrows, which have so often turned us in search of some higher strengthener than any arm of flesh. To him also be glory for all the wonderful course of the world's history, wherein by strange and mysterious providences, good has been brought out of evil, matter has been subdued to mind, brute force has been found inferior to justice, the patriot has trodden down the oppressor, the primeval curse has lost its sting, want has become the stimulus of labour, and labour the instrument of progress. Nor less, but rather more, to God be praise for the religious history of mankind, though the page may be sprinkled with blood. To his providence and his Holy Spirit be ascribed the work of raising up many servants, such as Melchisedec, Moses, and Samuel; and so of keeping alive in the world an elect assembly, of priest, and prophet, and saint; who, however imperfect in their generation, still leavened with the fear of God the perverseness of man's heart; trampling over influences apparently most powerful and most opposed. That a succession of such men has never been extinct, but has rather waxed mightier in persecution; that in the earlier stages of its progress it embodied its own experiences in writing, whereby we possess both a faithful record of the past, and a written voice of the Church, wherewith all subsequent utterances of the Holy Spirit through the reason of man must submit to be compared, so as to be tested thereby; but above all, that in the fulness of time the Prince of peace came, breaking down partition walls, and reconciling Jew and Gentile alike to each other, and to God; so

that henceforward mankind is Israel, and the world is Jerusalem, and all our Deborahs must learn to speak in the language of Mary, seeking the one thing needful, by sitting at the feet of Christ. These things, brethren, are all the work of God, and they ought to be marvellous in our eyes. It ought to be with us an object of no mean ambition to join ourselves on to this company of the servants of the Lord; even to be afflicted, if it must needs be, in their affliction; enduring, as men who see that which is invisible, and smitten with a great desire of no earthly crown. Truly if our light is greater, so also is our responsibility. Deborah may be judged by the standard of her own times. She felt no reproach of conscience as she broke into her strain of triumph, for she spoke according to the light that was in her.

But we, brethren, in proportion as the Fatherly providence and Holy Spirit of God are ever revealing to us more of the eternal mind, are called upon, by every consideration of our soul's health, to act on the highest standard which may be open to our conception. Judge you therefore, I entreat you, candidly for yourselves, whether you are now doing your duty as honestly, by God, and by man the child of God, and by your own immortal souls, as Deborah and Barak did their duty in their day by what they naturally conceived to be the cause of the Lord.

If you see ignorance around you, and do nothing to enlighten it; or want and pain innocent yet pining, and do nothing to relieve it; if you see profaneness and vice, or meanness and falsehood, yet encourage it; if you suffer any favourite sin to make encroachment on your

lives, lurking perhaps in the secret places of your mind. like the archers of Canaan by the watering-places of Israel; if in short you are either consciously doing harm or doing no good, then brethren, it is my duty to say you are in danger of the curse of Meroz—for why?—<sup>1</sup>You come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

LAMPETER, *June*, 1852.

<sup>1</sup> It might here be considered, whether those who observe a dangerously growing discrepancy now between the faith of some, and the knowledge of others, and who are aware that it arises in part from the exaggerations of religious teachers, are justified in giving the weight of their own authority to such exaggerations; or in contrasting the divine teachings in general, and those especially termed our two great *revelings*, more strongly than facts will warrant.

## SERMON VIII.

### *PARENTS AND CHILDREN.*

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*A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*

Proverbs xvii. 25.

No one can read the Book of Proverbs attentively, without observing that it is of a character somewhat different from any other in the Bible. It is neither historical, like the Book of Kings; nor devotional, like the Psalms; nor poetical, like the grand strains in which the Hebrew prophets embodied their inspiration. There is rather something homely and didactic in the air of the whole book. The several proverbs were precisely that sound which we can imagine falling from the lips of old men, as, rejoicing in the summer evening's coolness, they sat in the gate of Hebrew cities. Whether then we look at the precepts themselves, or whether we consider the origin of writings which most nearly resemble them in other countries, we can scarcely doubt that the wise son of king David was as much their collector as their author; and that he brought out of the treasury of his memory things which were old, as well as out of his conception those which were new.

Nor is the above idea inconsistent with the title-page prefixed to the whole book. I say the title-page;



for such is evidently the true description of the first six verses, which are unfortunately in our arrangement made part of the first chapter. We find, in this preliminary description of the work now opening, that it is said to comprehend “the words of the wise, and *their* dark sayings.” It follows therefore that we are about to read the proverbs of more persons than one.

After this announcement of the contents of the work, the seventh verse contains this motto: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

In the eighth verse is the actual commencement of the Book of Proverbs: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

Now it needs no elaborate proof, that the character of a work thus addressed by a parent to his child, is likely to be one eminently instructive. We are prepared to find in it little touches, characteristic of the life and manners of the time; as well as old adages and maxims, pregnant with the wisdom of time-hallowed experience. Such is accordingly the general nature of the book under consideration; and on both these accounts it deserves more repeated perusal than is usually accorded to it. For, first, we hence gather many illustrations of ancient manners. We see how lawless was in many respects the society of the East; how bold the precursor of the modern Bedouin in his life of plunder, and how coarse the aspect under which Vice too often presented itself. We see political economy in its infancy; and the Jews chiefly pastoral, rather than agricultural, but already betraying, by their aptness for

usury, the disposition which centuries of wandering were afterwards destined to ingrain.

But, amidst these features of a temporary state of things, we also find many truths, gathered probably from much experience, and savouring of a wisdom written for all time. For, however much physical inventions may modify the outward world, there is (morally) nothing new under the sun. The same nature, in its wants and hopes, and fears, and temptations, continually besets us. We have ever therefore need to be reminded “*to fear the Lord and depart from evil:*” for Hell and “destruction are before the Lord, how much more the hearts of men.”

If however there be one set of persons among us, to whom the Book of Proverbs seems addressed, rather than to another, it is emphatically the young. For it contains, like the Essays of Lord Bacon, the English Spectator, and the Rambler, a number of those pithy sayings and just reflections, which contribute to form our principles and insensibly build up the character. And although there may be periods in our life, when a cast of advice so eminently *prudential* might be thought likely to chill rather than animate, this fear does not apply to that fresh stage, when our too eager spirit seems to require (the aid of) every moral restraint. But the especial advantage of Solomon’s Proverbs above most other works of the kind, is, that it starts from the true source of right thought and action: it bids us keep diligently the heart within us; and honour God, as well as those whom God has made our most natural teachers, without us. We recognise, in the outset, the guidance

of the same Spirit as said of old, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

Obvious, and even common-place, as such a precept may appear, it may be doubted if men in general are sufficiently alive to all that it involves. The most accurate thinker of ancient times did indeed teach, that in the family were to be found the germs of the state. But we too generally speak, as if "Honour thy father and thy mother" was a precept intended only for the precincts of the nursery. Whereas, if we consider the prominent place given to such injunctions in Holy Scripture, and follow out the train of thought which is thus likely to be inspired in us, we shall find the principles here involved to lie at the bottom of all virtue—I had nearly added—of all religion. For, when that dread Being, who is the Alpha and the Omega, would give mankind some faint conception of a majesty so transcendant that it can only be approached in human language by metaphor and parable, he does so, by condescending to term himself our Father, which is in heaven. Such language seems intended at once to warm our affection for the heavenly, and to deepen our reverence for the earthly parent. It suggests to us, that, after all our deepest wisdom and our most anxious scheming, we are but, as it were, cherished playthings in the unseen hands of One, whose providence is more to us than the most thoughtful affection of parents is to an unconscious infant, or a helpless child. But may it not also remind us, how much, not merely of our substance, but of our very minds and thoughts and principles of action, is in fact derived from our parents. Does not, indeed, reflection show us that we are fearfully and

wonderfully made; not merely in that the likeness of a parent's face and frame descends to child; but that we derive so much of our mental being, our impulses and inclinations, our habitual thoughts and our manner of reasoning or acting from the impress stamped upon us, while as yet our members were written only in the book of God; or while our young spirit was unconsciously imbibing an indelible change from the accent and example of our father and our mother. I pretend not nicely to define what comes of organisation, and what is formed by habit. But if any one enjoys a healthy frame, and the blessedness of sleep undisturbed by pain, he owes it in a measure to the temperance or the purity of those from whose loins he sprang. If his years, while yet tender, are schooled in industry, if his lips learn to lisp no profane or unclean sound, if an instinct of pure taste and reverent feeling is developed in him with his opening consciousness, and strengthens with his strength, if he contracts early habits of prayer, of soberness, and reverence towards God, which, abiding in the heart, puts forth fruit in all honesty towards man, he is indebted for all these blessings, under heaven, to those who determined that they and their household should fear the Lord; who perhaps thought of him often in the watches of the night, and who made him the child, not of their foolish pride, but of their careful training, and of their secret prayers. It cannot be, said a father of the fourth century, to one who saw her child as yet a stranger in every sense to Christ,—it cannot be that the son of so many tears should perish everlastingly.

Our parents, indeed, lay deep the foundation of what we shall be; time builds upon it; we add something to

the building with our own hands; the Holy Spirit of God is ever near at hand, whispering through our conscience, our feelings, and our understanding, what good habit to lay on, and what mischievous rubbish of vice and evil company we should cast aside; but hard at hand are also passions, and lusts, and conceits, the pride of the eyes, and the pride of life, and that true unbelief which disdains counsel; each presenting itself in turn as if it were some precious stone. So the mysterious building of the inner man goes on, being daily edified. Who can tell if it will grow up into a temple for all holy and self-sacrificing thoughts, worthy of God and of eternity; or if the sand of selfishness, and the mire of uncleanness, and the perishable stubble of pleasures which pass away, will have been so kneaded into the walls from the foundation, that the rough tempest of the last judgment must sweep it into the sea of destruction? and great and lamentable, even for angels to weep over, may be the fall thereof. Thus much is certain.—Whoever has been blest with pious parents casts away one great guarantee for the soundness of his building, if he loses sight of the homely maxims, and the affectionate counsels, which they gave him at the foundation. Many a man learns, by the sad experience of misfortune, truths, which at last he must acknowledge, but which he might have known long before, if he had only cherished the words of his father, and forgotten not the law of his mother. Even so mysteriously has it pleased God to link our well-being with the honour of those from whom we spring.

Something indeed of a like principle may be observed even in the history of nations. Every people

inherits a certain treasury of experience from its ancestors. Time, which changes even the structure of the globe, may render change or development necessary in the framework and administration of states; the clothes of the child do not fit the man; and full-grown nations may have to put away the things of less instructed ages; but that people will make the surest and most regular progress, which stands sufficiently on the old ways, to consider well which new way is best; and those rulers, either in Church or State, will consult most truly for the improvement of our children, who in reverential affection desire good cause to be shown for laying aside whatever they have received in honour from their fathers. Some ingenious persons have even thought that the fifth commandment had its most direct reference to the hereditary institutions of a country. They have imagined, that the promise of dwelling long in the land denotes that stability which is found in kingdoms tenacious of established usage, as distinct from the fickleness and fluctuation of races ever saying, Who will show us any good? Whatever may be thought of this interpretation, the principle which suggested it is so far confirmed by the experience of the world as at least to deserve being occasionally borne in mind. We ourselves are children of the Cavaliers and of the Crusaders; of Jeremy Taylor and South; of Cranmer and Ridley; of St Anselm and St David; and not least, of the Apostles of Christ. God is ever teaching each generation something new; but may our affections never be cold to the memory, nor our ears deaf to the wisdom, of those who as the servants of God quitted themselves manfully in the days of old.

But there is sufficient matter to impress wholesomely, and even to awe any man who will consider for half an hour the striking, and evidently providential connexion, simply between parents and their own children. He will find that one motive to a Christian and consistent life may be drawn from the influence which the texture of his own mind, and the habits of his own life, probably exercise even upon his children in years as yet far away. The greatest reverence, said an honest Heathen, is due to our children. How again this idea runs through the Psalms of the Hebrews. That natural-minded people found a consolation in thinking that the Lord whom they honoured would not suffer their seed to beg their bread; and the experience of those who had been young, and had become old, confirmed them in this pious hope.

Now I say nothing, though with slight change my argument might be directed even more strongly, to those chosen few, who in love with an unearthly beauty, or devoted to some great cause incompatible with domestic ties, have espoused themselves in spirit to that Church of God, which instead of her father's has children, whom she makes princes in all lands. There is, however, an unseen friend, more to be trusted than husband or wife, and who can give an inheritance better than sons and daughters.

But for the overwhelming majority even of Christian men it is worth considering, that whatever they are in temper, in spirit, in habit, there is a certain probability in favour of their children starting on the way to become something of the same kind. They will give, unconsciously, an impulse, which perhaps they would

little desire, to the mind and the destiny of those in whom their fondest wishes will be centered. Nor is it either absurd or far-fetched to say that this foresight for the mental inheritance of our children may begin even in youth. For the rewards of God may seem to linger, and his judgments may be silent of tread; but they come, dark as the night, and inevitable as the winter. You see Jacob deceiving his own father for the blessing's sake, and in turn deceived by his own sons, when, if God had not been more merciful than man, they would have brought his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. Again, you see Eli neglecting his sons; and the consequence is, that men abhor the offering of the Lord; the very Ark of God, to which the poor old man's heart sincerely clung, is given over to the insult of the scoffer; and while remorse, mingled with devout mourning, quenches the feeble spark of his own life, the last daughter of his house dies in childbed, saying, Ichavod—The glory is *departed* from our house, and from Israel.

Surely, brethren, happy among ourselves is that parent who remembers that the promises are to us, and to our children; that even the infant of a Christian parent is to be, in the Apostle's language, *holy*; that, if not in the camp of Israel, much less in the Church of God, is any offspring of the womb, conceived in sin, to be left unsprinkled by that blood which can turn the destroying angel from the door; or by that water, which represents to us the double stream—water to cleanse, and blood to atone,—from the stricken side of Him who bore our sins upon the accursed tree. For, as the rainbow is our witness against the recurrence of a deluge, so there are three that bear witness against sin and



death: the Spirit, the water, and the blood: that is, the two sacraments of purification and of propitiation, and the gracious influence with which God blesses whoever rightly uses them; and these three agree in one; for they agree in coming from Christ, and in testifying to us of Christ as our Saviour.

Happy then is he, who either for such thoughts, or for any others of a like nature, accepts the provision of our Church as to infant Baptism, alike in the letter, and in the spirit; who therefore endeavours to quicken from the first dawning of consciousness a better instinct in his child for whatever things are pure and lovely and of good report; taking heed, that the waters be not cruelly poisoned at their source; and perhaps casting, day by day, such fragments of the wood of the tree of life, as may (in prudence) appear likely to heal the native bitterness of the spring. I say in prudence, thereby intending to suggest a doubt, how far it is prudent, to require from children that strong language in which the feverish play of full-grown passions may be truly described, but which on very young lips has either no meaning at all, or only the false meaning of a parrot, which should be taught to simulate emotion. Whereas, the stirring stories of the old Hebrew history, the parables of our Saviour which interpret themselves, and those precepts of his which go straight to the heart of every human being, can never be misplaced: and Christianity seems best presented to the young mind in some such form as they of themselves suggest; in its general aspect, namely, of *edifying* what has to be built, rather than on its special side of restoring what has been broken down. But prayer to God the Father, in the

name and the spirit of his only-begotten Son, a conception of the great Father's purity and loveliness, such as Christ revealed, with simple prayer that by his Holy Spirit He would enable us to grow up into such characters as may have some shadow of the divine likeness. These things, brethren, fall within the compass of the Christianity of children.

Surely he is wise who thus suffers his little ones to come unto Jesus, and starts them on the journey of life with a blessing, fresh from the Saviour's arms. Nor here let it be thought in me impertinent to remark, that whatever opinion persons may choose to hold on the subject of baptism, one clear result of a controversy not yet remote, ought to have been a strong conviction on the mind of every rational man, of the enormous importance of the education of a child. For, either our children are Christians, as St Paul certainly thought, or they are Heathens, according to the modern theory; if the first is true, can anything be more important than the training of the inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven to some correspondence with his high calling? or, if the second should be correct, how can we talk of "Missions to the Heathen," and leave human beings uneducated, therefore necessarily unconverted, at our very doors?

One understands the circumstances which in our own country have almost of necessity made the office of the schoolmaster too much merged in that of the preacher. But there is no reason why the duty of the parent should be so as well.

Now, however, let us turn to the converse of the picture, which we have been sketching in precept. That

son must be wise who cherishes throughout life the remembrance of what can never possibly come to him again, the earliest counsels of his mother, the latest wishes of his father. There is a certain danger amidst all our modern improvements of education, that the strong ties of family teaching may be somewhat weakened; that the parents, for example, in the humbler classes may throw entirely upon the schoolmaster that responsibility which no one but themselves can fully support, and that the children of classes somewhat higher, thrown into scenes and modes of living removed perhaps from their homes, may forget the universal and primary revelation of God, to honour their father and their mother. But, brethren, the human soul, tossed like a little bark on some tempestuous sea, cannot afford, in this difficult navigation of life, to throw away a single anchor—a single help, upon the side of God and of godliness. Just as the infant's first attempt at walking is encouraged chiefly by a smile, so to any right-minded man it must be throughout life no weak incentive to all virtue and industry, that they who started him on his way have watched his goings with anxiety; that his praise would be welcomed by them as the blessing of Heaven; and that his disgrace would almost startle them in their graves. None can tell what honest thrift, what studiously concealed self-denial, in some simple home, have given many a man the opportunity of becoming great or useful in his generation. It is more than sad, it is horrible to think, with what conceited extravagance, with what base indulgence in things sensual, such exertions are often requited, in our towns, our universities,

and our colleges, by the coxcomb or spendthrift son. The worst cases of selfish waste, as regards things human and divine, are generally in young men, who of all others were most bound to abstain from everything of the kind. It almost seems as if the only end of so much virtue were sometimes to enable a youth to show his utter worthlessness before God and man. "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and a bitterness to her that bare him."

If we are wise, brethren, we shall not be ashamed, either of the Gospel of Christ, or of profiting by the many indirect teachings in nature of the good providence of our Heavenly Father. The style of thought, which I am endeavouring to suggest, of considering ourselves in no sense our own, but as manifoldly debtors to our parents, to our children, to our country, to our Saviour, and to our God, would often serve as an innocent talisman to keep back our footsteps from the broad and easy way which leadeth to destruction. It would be in spirit, and in temper, the track which the Apostle Paul marked out for himself. (For he counted himself on every side a debtor.) It would also fall in admirably with that doctrine of our Saviour, that the second commandment is like unto the first. Our duty to our neighbour, and our duty to ourselves, are essentially the same as—they differ only in aspect from—our duty towards God. One of the ideas which especially needs awakening, in some places where the language of religion is sufficiently popular, is this of the second commandment being like unto the first—of our conduct in the relations of family and of society being the truest index of

the state of our heart towards the Judge of all the earth. The dealings of the market-place, and the habits of common intercourse, have more to do with the secret chamber and the Church than many persons are willing to allow. Show me your fruits, in temper, conduct, management of time and money, in soberness, and self-control, and I will share with St James the responsibility of giving you credit for your faith.

But indeed, for the general tenour of what has been said, we may plead the authority, not only of our Lord's precept, but of his own most blessed example. We read how, during his childhood as the Son of man, He was subject unto his parents; as if the Evangelist deemed, that so great an humility in one conscious of the highest wisdom all along dwelling in himself, was not the least remarkable of the miracles of his life. We see how, in the prayer which He taught his disciples, He did not disdain to adopt a form, every clause of which (save perhaps one) is yet extant in the Jewish Talmud; which, therefore, we may fairly suppose the Son of God to have meekly learnt, (therein giving us an example) as He knelt in mysterious childhood at his Virgin Mother's knee. We see him leaving his parents, only when the time had come that He should be found in his Heavenly Father's house; and by the cross, on which our faith is fixed, we receive also a lesson of charity, when He whom the heaven of heavens awaited, commended to his beloved disciple the mother with whose pride and in whose sorrow He had been associated during his pilgrimage on earth. Thereby we recognise the features of him whom we call Master and Lord, but

who is not ashamed to call himself the firstborn among our brethren, that so He may draw us by the cords of a man. Thereby also the preacher of Christ may feel warranted to bid his hearers recognise the sanctity of human life and of all its natural relations. Since, in sorrow and in glory, Christ remembered those to whom he was not a debtor, but a giver above all they could ask or think; so, through whatever changes of this mortal life the providence of God may lead us, whether near or far off, whether humbled or exalted, whether busy or at leisure, tossed into collision with men of every passion and character, or undergoing the equal dangers of a slightly occupied, (let it not be a listless,) life,—*remember we*, who first of all living men prayed for us, and who taught us to pray; by whose affection every honest triumph of ours would be doubled; by whose anxiety our unthinking sin is aggravated; and who, more than others, will rejoice with joy unspeakable, if we shall have so quitted ourselves throughout, as the sons of earthly fathers, that, after this troublous life ended, we may unite, both with them, and with all the spirits of just men made perfect, in swelling the universal hymn, to OUR FATHER, WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

This may he grant, from whom every fatherhood is named, who when we had gone into a far country, brought us back, and made us again sons by regeneration and adoption, to whom be all glory, and honour, praise, love, and thanksgiving, for ever.

## SERMON IX.

### *THE FALLING OF MAN.*

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*Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and be clear when Thou judgest. Psalm li. 4.*

WE can scarcely glance at human life, without observing, that some men seem born to succeed in what they undertake, and some to fail. It is by no means an uninteresting question, whether any clue can be found to the explanation of such a different result. But, in prosecuting any inquiry of the kind, we find so infinite a variety, and such frequent contradiction, in the circumstances, under which some men attain, and others fail of their object, that we almost despair of reducing all the instances under the operation of a general law. For the race is not always to the swift; but time and chance happen to all men. With one, industry achieves its merited triumph; with another, it breaks down the health: in one case, cunning escapes its desert, in another it is ignominiously branded. A marked sanctity of life is sometimes honoured, at others ridiculed: a vehement earnestness of temper may either force its

way through reluctant crowds, or it may provoke more obstinate opposition; while a gentle suavity, in some cases, soothes and wins men to compliance, and, in others, is despised as feebleness; so that, like the atoms of Democritus, the moral elements of our system might almost seem, in this transitory world, to be wrangling and jumbled together in every variety of confusion.

Yet, on the whole, our reason ventures to affirm, even before it reaches that point at which it transmutes itself into faith, that to keep innocence is true wisdom; for that wicked doers shall be rooted out, and that the righteous must ultimately inherit the land. For, it would be a mere *truism* to observe, that the more nearly a person approached the proper mean of the good qualities above mentioned, industry, sanctity, earnestness, and meekness, the more likely he would be to enjoy the promises of the world that now is, as well as of that which is to come. If good men fail here of attaining solid happiness, this is the event, not in so far as they are good, but by some defect, or drawback in their goodness.

The system of the universe does, then, retain the moral impress stamped by its Maker. Perhaps, moreover, all mankind may be said to fall easily into at least two classes; for one of which we never venture to augur any high or permanent success in life, while for the other, even if they occasionally fail, we still anticipate a period, when the objects they have proposed to themselves will be honestly and worthily attained. Under the first may be ranged all those self-complacent persons, who learn nothing from experience; while the second



comprehends those to whom the errors of the past are a source of wisdom for the future. How often do we find men charging upon their ill-luck, or upon the treachery of their friends, the just consequences of their own misconduct! How slow are such people to recognize in themselves the true source of their wants, or of their misfortunes! Their teacher, their doctor, their government, the soil of their neighbourhood, or the climate or habits of their country, are in turn invoked to account for their ignorance, their ill-health, their impoverished circumstances, and the slovenliness, or even the immorality of their habits.

But *who told them that they were naked?* That evil spirit of self-love within them, which eagerly suggested every mode of exculpating themselves, by alleging some external person or accident as an excuse. "Such a man was always their enemy," or "he was the friend of their opponent:" therefore only he decided the case against them. Or again, if they had enjoyed such and such advantages, they could have done more than some one who is now applauded. From listening to such whispers, men easily acquire the power of hardening themselves against the lessons, which the providential variety of events in our life was intended to convey: they never rectify their conduct by a scrutiny of their own motives, or an acknowledgement of their own errors; and being thus satisfied, that they ought already to possess the esteem of mankind, they preclude themselves from the chance of ever improving sufficiently to deserve it. Hence their old age is only an advanced childhood: as was said of some returned exiles, "*They have learned*

*nothing, and they have forgotten nothing.*" A stolid pride renders the first impossible, and the absence of fresh ideas renders the second unlikely.

On the other hand, how different is that patient sagacity, which studies nothing so keenly as the deep seeds of every miscarriage of its own! How sensitive in suspecting itself; how observant of all the conditions of success, whether they have been complied with or violated; how persevering, under happier auspices, in its renewal of the trial! Men, who thus judge themselves, have less room to be judged of others; though they fall, they are not cast down; though surrounded by difficulties, they have the satisfaction of persevering to the end. The memory of each mistake is a landmark for the future; and their mature life is a practical embodiment of hoarded experience. Almost all great conquerors or discoverers, whether in the realm of action, or of thought, have had in them something of this temper. In short, it is a matter of daily observation, that men, who constantly throw off the responsibility of their own failure upon others, are likely still to fail: while those, whom humility enables to profit by experience, have at least an important element, both of wisdom and of success.

Now it is worth considering, whether any principle, analogous to the above, holds good, more especially in religion. We have here too a race to run, in which those who seem to start with the greatest natural advantages are not always crowned: we have a series of struggles to undergo, either with our own passions or with the too vivid attraction of objects around us, in

any one of which struggles it is most disastrous to fail, and in which it is important to understand aright the causes of whatever failure may occur.

Perhaps you will allow me to consider this graver portion of our subject under three distinct heads:

I. The general constitution of the world.

II. The case of personal misconduct or sin.

III. The comparatively rare occurrence of excessive humility or mental distress, arising from religious causes.

In the first place, then, it may well be doubted whether those teachers should be followed who assert the physical frame of the world to be actually disorganised by the fall of man. We do indeed read, "Cursed is the earth for thy sake:" but this may mean only, "*Cursed*, as far as thou art concerned:" the curse, or (more properly speaking,) the *guilt* may be *in man*; and to his moral disorder, those things which should have been for his weal, may become occasions of falling. Just as to the feverish palate the most wholesome food may become nauseous or injurious, so the whole frame of nature may seem (as it were) to sympathize with our minds diseased. But, whether or not the above limits should be assigned to the Scriptural expression, "Cursed is the earth,"—it is at least clear, that the world abounds in a large amount of suffering. Why need I mention all the aches and pains, the nerves overstrained, and poverty overtaken; or the premature death perhaps of one friend, and the violent divulsion of another,—events which most of us have in turn been compelled either to compassionate or to deplore,—and whose silent eloquence our memories do but too vividly recall? Yet it is almost

equally clear, such suffering is not, as it were, the regular law of the world, but rather its exception. Men seem to have been designed to labour, (perhaps) but still to enjoy and to be thankful: to develop every faculty of body and mind by healthy exercise; to be refreshed by mutual sympathy and affection; to quit themselves in life with such gravity as becomes immortal and accountable beings, yet with such cheerfulness as is natural in those whose Judge is also a benignant Father; and to be gathered in a full age to all the spirits of just men made perfect, which rest (untouched by torment) in the hand of God. To the development (however) of this gracious design there are very numerous exceptions. Now those observers who admit no clue, but mere speculation, in unravelling all mysteries, are apt to consider such exceptions either as accidents or as a necessary result of the enormous magnitude of the scale, and the general nature of the laws of Creation. We need not deny the importance which really belongs to the two latter considerations. Yet certainly the human heart, perhaps also the human conscience, or our innate sense of justice, seems to require something more, as a satisfactory solution of the enigma. We rather shrink from hearing the sharers of our humanity compared to seeds, like thistle-down, of which a sufficient portion only is preserved to satisfy the ends of nature, while far the largest quantity is swept by the winds into annihilation. We seem to require that those inextinguishable instincts of justice and mercy, which were the secret writing of the Divine finger upon the walls of our heart, shall not be disappointed in the administration of the world by Him who

made us capable of feeling them. We know we are only the clay: we do not repine that some of us are fashioned with more beauty or to more honour than others; but our Potter has declared to us, that he is righteous: now even an earthly potter makes not vessels for the sake of shattering them: did he, the heavenly one, whose name is Holy and True, breathe his diviner spirit into the nostrils of any of us only on purpose to make us capable of dwelling with everlasting burnings<sup>1</sup>? Or again, in this life, is right merely might? is truth only the opinion of the multitude? does sorrow spring out of the earth like the sparks fly upward? is the world an unwieldy machine, in which force, and fraud, and chance, may derange every spring, and thwart every pious calculation?

Now to all such questions as the above (and my instances are thrown somewhat confusedly together,) both conscience and Scripture seem, on the whole, to concur in rendering answers, which are practically the same. Scarcely a misfortune befalls, still less does an illness overtake us, but our lips, even if used for a time to bolder accents, tremble unconsciously into prayer. “O Lord, I have sinned”—is—(with whatever variation of phrase—) the burden of the melody to which our hearts at such a time are strung.

A fever reasons better than a Clarke. When earth fails us, we turn to heaven, not without a miserable foreboding that peradventure we turn too late. We do not then say, “What have I done to deserve this sickness?” but, “O Lord, spare me,” or, “heal my soul, for I

<sup>1</sup> See Calvin on Romans, ch. ix. vv. 11, 17, 18.

have sinned against thee." Such appear to be the natural dictates of conscience, and such have they been (*essentially*) in all ages and nations, of which any knowledge has reached us.

But now what is the doctrine of our Scriptures? Do they not teach, that sin entered into the world, and death by sin. If then death, surely all its precursors, and all its kindred. Suffering then, and shame, sickness, sorrow, madness, are in the world, by sin. We here then discover what we were in search of. We have a moral solution of what was otherwise a dark riddle. We have two things, one of which at least cannot be denied to exist; while the existence of the other is acknowledged in proportion as our conscience is alive to its rightful office. The one, then, explains the other.

But I would not, brethren, urge this doctrine of original sin, or the sin of our race, upon you, as a mere theory. For it is in things spiritual, as we saw in things temporal; we cannot find a remedy, unless we know our disease. Those speculative persons to whom I have already alluded (not without the respect due to eminent ability,) by resolving all human suffering into chance, show themselves not sufficiently sensitive to human sin. Again, by not knowing that we are a wreck, they betray an inadequate conception of the stateliness of the vessel as it rose in its original idea before our Builder's eye. It is therefore no matter for surprise, that starting, as they do, with an overwrought conception of the self-supporting powers of our nature, they do not reach practically so high a standard, as men who confess, the children of Adam require to be lifted out of the dust.

Even if it seem a paradox, it appears to be at least attested by experience, that the men most *praiseworthy* have been the most steadfast renouncers of praise : the most charitable have been the most earnest in denying that alms could justify ; the most meritorious have most utterly disclaimed merit ; the nearest to such a virtuous ideal, as imagination conceives, have been men who almost (perhaps) shrank from the very term *virtue*. as thinking that by the grace of God only they were what they were. Now such a testimony of experience is in itself the strongest confutation of the error ascribed to Pelagius, and undoubtedly held by modern philosophers of a decidedly less Christian kind. It affords a practical proof, that *woe is to him who striveth with his Maker* ; and, that what God has made crooked, it is not for man, after his own fashion, to make straight.

*Against God, God only, have we sinned, and done evil in his sight : so that he is justified, even when he sentences us to suffer ; and clear, even when he speaks the condemnation of our race.*

Upon the second point, it would be in vain I should now attempt to trace the intricate arts by which our self-love defends itself against our conscience. But suffer me to say, if it be important not to forget the fallen condition of poor human nature, it is far more vitally important we should not be blind to our own personal sin. Our indignation is but lost upon dead men's sins, and Jews' idolatries, unless we apply them to analogous temptations, which beset ourselves. Perhaps indeed many sins, especially of the more treacherous kind, are apt to lurk under a ready, and almost ostenta-

tious confession of the general guiltiness of mankind. "Ah! sir, we are all sinners," is often the vague exclamation of one with whom we would reason of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. True enough. But we wanted something more precise, something more personal, from one to whom willingly we would say "Peace," yet fear to say it, while there is no peace. Profuse quotations from some deeply-reasoned and ill-understood Epistle are not so much to the purpose as making restitution to whomsoever we have wronged; weeping out the stain of evil thoughts; and earnest prayer for the Spirit, which is first pure, and then peaceable. God trieth the heart and reins. He is holy, therefore are his people to be holy.

We seem then to require a conception, at once vivid and sincere, of the distance to which every sin in its degree removes us from participation in the blessedness, which is with them who love God. What can create such a conception? Surely nothing short of a far more lively faith than we are apt to cherish of the ever-present eye of an All-holy God: hence a sensitiveness to our own faults; a feeling of religion, which suffers us not to deal lightly and deceitfully, after the manner of dissemblers, with our own conscience; and so a habit of honest and prayerful self-examination. It is sufficiently obvious, that both the habit of prayer, with all the better thoughts, which it is calculated to awaken; and the study both of the holy precepts and examples given us in Scripture, are likely, by suggesting the contrast to our own imperfections, to awaken in us such a sensitiveness as is here recommended. Nor yet should we



neglect all the ordinary dealings of divine Providence. Every mistake we make, every misfortune we suffer, should be a memento of our need of humility and repentance.

Perhaps, also, we may learn much from the very censures of our enemies. It is one advantage of public schools, that the very rudeness and free-spoken malice of boys in their quarrels afford every individual such benefit as he chooses to derive from keen criticism upon his most obvious faults. The medicine is harsh, and the mode of administering it sufficiently unamiable, yet, if wisely taken, it may tend to mental health. Something of the same kinds besets us throughout life. All sorts of libels, jealousies, and misconstructions, furnish us with occasions which it is only too natural to resent, but which it would be our wisdom to improve, by considering what probable admixture of truth gave a sting to the malice, which would otherwise have been harmless.

But, most emphatically, by considering that divine mercy and beneficence which have encircled our steps all the days of our life, and by recognising our many sins and negligences, which have most justly provoked the apparent interruption of the divine favour, we may learn to say in true contrition: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," so that thou, O Lord, art justified in sentencing me to this pain or uneasiness. and clear when in thy judgment thou findest me wanting. If there is any one here who cannot use such a saying, not only in doctrinal assertion for the children of Adam, but in sad and actual truth for himself—let him consider whether he has not most urgent need to learn the

true nature of sin, the exceeding holiness of God, and his own manifold estrangement from a righteousness which he seems to have lost even the power of adequately feeling. Take heed, then, lest there be any root of bitterness among you; lest any among you seem to himself alive, while in the sight of God he is spiritually dead. We serve a God who requires truth in the inward parts.

Thirdly: it appears not improper to add some observations for the use of persons, who may possibly be so far from deficient in the habit of humble self-condemnation above recommended, that they may have made it the occasion of unnecessarily gloomy, or despondent, views of the divine dealings with man. It is not possible to address a mixed congregation without the very necessity of dwelling upon topics, which by a large portion of our hearers are required, while to some they may be less appropriate. We must tell the guilty of judgment, yet endeavour not to terrify the contrite: we may proclaim mercy to the sincere penitent, though with some danger of lulling back into its slumber the half-awakened conscience of the hardened offender.

Here, however, we may remark the converse of a sentiment, which was urged above—just as the man, who does not condemn himself in the sight of God, in order to seek grace and forgiveness, has reason to fear, lest all the woes written in the law come upon him; so those persons who do thus condemn themselves, and who sincerely embrace the divine mercy held out by Jesus Christ both as an instrument of pardon and also of sanctification, may securely feel there is no longer any

condemnation against them. For to both parties it may be proclaimed that the life-long struggle between the holiness our will aspires to and the sin our goings so easily slide into, which in Scripture is imaged as the primeval curse upon fallen man, and the strong remonstrances of conscience, which in Scripture become more audible as the thunders of Mount Sinai, as well as the sorrow rising into indignation against false profession and unrighteousness, which kindles the wild eloquence of the Prophets, are all intended, not so much to destroy man, as to save. They speak indeed of punishment, but, during this our day of grace, the punishment of God is *remedial* in its design. He sometimes causes the husks of the swine to be refused us, that we may arise and go unto our Father. He smites, that He may heal—He terrifies, that He may console—He speaks in thunder, in order to open our ears to the anthem of angels, “*Good will on earth, peace towards men,*”—He proclaims the law, but it is to lead us as a schoolmaster, until we feel our need of the wisdom—until we embrace the manifestation of the personal goodness—of God.

The very sense then, brethren, of the Fall of Adam is itself the beginning of his children’s rising ; for from whence could have arisen this old uneasiness with things that vanish away, but from the deep yearning for an inheritance more abiding? From whence this<sup>1</sup> lofty discontent with our own shortcomings, but from some dim conception of the High and Holy One, who made man in his own image, and would have us remember the

<sup>1</sup> I take this quotation from Whytehead’s “College Life.”

Rock from whence we were hewn? From whence, in short, this sense of sin<sup>1</sup>, but from a desire, perhaps faint as yet and newly born, yet still a desire of holiness? See how such feelings worked in the inconsistent and fallen Corinthians. What earnestness it wrought in them, what jealousy, what revenge! Revenge against ourselves for every sin is the only vengeance in which He to whom it belongeth allows us willingly to share. Pray to him, that such a self-chastening revenge may ripen into a desire of holiness, not to be satisfied until it possesses; into a wisdom, to whose pinions the acknowledgment of past folly shall lend its strongest plumes.

Such then, brethren, is the true moral, and the meaning, of the Fall of Man. Let it be our strong incitement to rise.

Know yourselves the children of the Most High: and, if stricken to the ground, lie not grovelling in the dust. Arise, shine, for your light is come. Shake yourselves from the dust; captives once; but now redeemed, and more than conquerors through Him who is stronger than your strongest enemy, and who loved you before the foundations of the world. Not in anger, but in wise parable, spake He that sentence of stern sound: "Cursed is the earth *to us* for the first Adam's sake: but blessed is the Heaven which the second Adam has opened to those whose thoughts are moulded in his likeness." Thorns and briers spring forth; so are we roused to develope our energies in reconquering our ideal

<sup>1</sup> Thus we blame in a man, what we do not in a child; and in a child, what we do not in an animal. The degrees of remorse are similar.

dominion, and to escape the more deadly thorns of passion and darkness, which indolence, left without a stimulus, would have engendered in the rank soil of our mind. In the sweat of our brow we eat bread: but there is a bread of life given freely to whosoever will take and eat. Dust we are, and unto dust we return; but if the likeness of the first Adam was only that of a living soul, the likeness of the second is that of a spirit which can give life. By His resurrection, as the Captain of our salvation, from the great humility of the grave, we have received an earnest, that, if our life be hidden, it is yet communicated to all those who do not obstinately reject it, by One who is both the Lord *and the Giver* of life. We are not then ashamed of the fall of man: for we know that the restoration in Christ is at least as universal, at least as free, at least as efficacious as the death in Adam. Probably it even leads to more glorious results than if our first parents had remained in mere childlike innocence; just as the man who has learnt to blame himself may lose light-hearted playfulness, but gain a more aspiring earnestness. Probably, I say, the divine image may not only be revived in its perfection, but it may receive, from the manifestation of the divine goodness in our Lord, a greater and more perfect manhood, by participation in His glorified nature, than the mere inheritance of Adam could have given us, without any sensible fall.

Neither do we shrink from confessing our own exceeding sinfulness. We know, that through the strait gate of repentance, and not without a struggle, can we enter on the narrow way of godliness. We do also

know that the business of our salvation is not merely an external thing, but is a work to be wrought in us.

Nor, again, are we swallowed up by overmuch sorrow, even though both our own hearts and the requirements of the divine law speak bitter things against us.

We know, by whose costly self-sacrifice we are enabled to offer up ourselves with such a consciousness of the love of God, and therefore such a confidence of being accepted, that by His stripes we are healed. We know also who it is that giveth more grace. Though our temptations be many, and our weakness pitiable, there are more with us than are against us. He who is Almighty, manifesting himself in Christ, and delegating the Holy Spirit as our strengthener, is in the midst of us; so that we shall not greatly fall. Therefore, dearly beloved, stand fast in the Lord. Only *flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent*: for sin is the perpetual tempter. And, putting off all filthiness of the flesh of the first Adam, be you renewed daily in true holiness, according to the spirit of the wisdom which cometh down from Heaven.

LAMPETER, *Sexagesima Sunday, Feb. 23, 1851.*

## SERMON X.

### *VOLUNTARY PALSY.*

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*Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.* St Mark ii. 9.

THE power of our Lord's miracles consists not so much in their being wonderful, as in their being significant. If he had merely moved mountains into the sea, we should not have been so wholesomely taught, as when he says to the leper, "I will, be thou clean." But the giver of life is also the restorer of health. To be healthful, was indeed part of the idea which seems to have been originally stamped on the constitution of all things in which is the breath of life. Perhaps it would be too sanguine a mode of reasoning, to say, that such an idea could ever have been entirely and without exception, realised, or brought to perfection, in the condition of mankind. Just as the steam-engine may burst, and yet we see that steam-engines in general are intended to carry; and just as the violets of early spring may often be nipped by the northerly wind, which yet on the whole braces the nerves of nature, and retards her vegetation until its proper season; so our teeth may be to eat, and our eyes to see, and our brains to act as organs of

thinking; yet incidentally they may not escape certain aches, and sicknesses, and derangements—the effects, perhaps, of circumstance—and almost the conditions, upon which alone they can exist; or, at least, of which it is difficult for us to understand how they could have been avoided, yet which certainly are not the end of life, and therefore probably did not enter into the Creator's design.

But, if this is true of the vegetable and animal life of which we too are partakers, much more, on entering into that intellectual region, in which human thoughts and human motives play their part, we observe a necessity, so to speak, for at least the capacity of evil. God is a free agent. How then could man be made in the likeness of God, without having freedom of choice and of action? If he were governed merely by external influences, he would be like the flower or the grass of the field; and again, if he had no other guide than mere natural instinct, he would be like the beasts which perish. It is the power of deliberately thinking, of choosing or of willing, and thus of originating action, which renders man properly human, a creature with the likeness of the Creator. In other words, free agency is a condition of humanity: whether this freedom be more or less perfect; whether subject to more or less of limitation: but in whatever degree it exists, it gives man the capacity of doing wrong. He has before him life and death; *nor these only*; but all that ample field of mistake, infirmity, negligence, suffering, sin, and sickness, which embraces, as it were, the debateable ground, or the confines between life, which God intended us to



lay hold of, and the many forms of death, which He has mercifully warned us to avoid.

You see, then, brethren, that in addition to the effect of mere circumstance, and without attempting to decide, how far the necessary accidents, or the hampering conditions of any scheme of existence on a large scale, would of themselves have prevented our enjoyment of invariable health, there is also a moral cause, a beginning, as it were, within ourselves; which renders disease, pain, and trouble of body or of spirit, a new set of accidents, which we are liable to have as our occasional companions in life, without therefore being able to ascribe their origin to Him who openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

Nothing, I trust, will here be understood, as if it was intended that in any individual case we might argue, the man is sick, and therefore he is more sinful than others. Such a practice would be the very opposite of one of those blessed truths, which our Saviour Christ especially revealed, and which it is the great object of his Church to keep alive, as glad tidings, in the world. When our Saviour was asked, Who did sin, this blind man or his parents? He answered, neither; that is, neither, more than men in general. So, when He heard of the Galileans slain among the sacrifices, and of those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, He took occasion to warn the rash dispensers of special providences, as if they were wielders of the thunderbolts of God, that what had befallen these sufferers was the common lot of mankind, and that their fate would be best used by the survivors, as a general admonition to prepare against a

judgment to come. For indeed, it was one of the blessed effects of the glad tidings of the love of God, as manifested by Christ, that it took away from the bent back of all drooping sufferers the additional burthen of believing themselves smitten by the special wrath of Heaven. Yet the same Jesus, when the sick of the palsy was brought near, looked down upon that distorted frame which no longer moved at its owner's will, and with that voice which prevails in heaven, said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Thereby the Lord teaches us, that, although we should judge no individual, there is yet an old and while the world shall last, an inseparable connexion, between the sin which God must judge, and the suffering which we will not allow him to heal. Two remedies, brethren, the good Physician offers us. We, like madmen, in the fever of our disordered impulses, stretch forth our hands for the one, and have no liking for the other. Give us ease, we say; give us health, strength, reputation, luxury, enjoyments, or whatever else we desire; but alas! in this very choice, we only betray the depth of the mental disease; we shew how selfish are the desires, how untamed the passions, how little obedient our wills to the holy law of God, how little animated by any large or expansive love, or any anxiety for the growth of his kingdom in the welfare and improvement of mankind. So the good Physician must needs turn away sorrowful, even as Christ of old weeping over Jerusalem. For, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*, must go before *Take up thy bed, and walk*. But there can be no forgiveness, while we press closer into ourselves the sin, which is itself

the disease; or while we take no pains to shake off those bad habits; those unchristian self-indulgences, which are the crutches of the halt, and the bed of men palsied in their very soul. How often did not God warn us against every sickness of mind and life, into which we are fallen; when he cautioned us by the experience of some older friend, "Avoid that sinful practice;" when he inspired the framers of our Prayer Book to put into our mouth petitions for every grace, and against every sin which so easily besets us, thereby guarding us on the right hand and on the left, at our out-going and our coming-in day by day; when at each stage of our life he expanded a new world within our minds, giving us again and again stronger and deeper perceptions of things old in themselves, yet ever new in their experience? and how often, by some touch of solemnity, which all our thoughtlessness could not escape, in observing suddenly the consequences of our past actions, in listening to a sermon, or in partaking of the holy sacrament of Christ's most precious death, has not the word of God come to us; thereby proving, that no child of man is in reality predestined by him to a spiritual palsy, but that he is ever saying, if we will only listen to him, *Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

Who can wonder, when the laws imprinted by the Almighty upon his creation are so generally broken, that the amount of suffering in the world should exceed that limit which might be fairly ascribed to the range of accident? If there is no appetite which men do not abuse, no earthly desire which they do not carry to excess, and even no deadness to all the nobler ends of

their being, into which they do not willingly plunge themselves, the necessary result must be a derangement of the conditions, upon which God pronounces the world to be very good. Labour is not necessarily an evil; knowledge need not puff up; thorns and briars may be but the heavings of that life, which is universally diffused, in places where no better harvest is sown. But, if the poor are either compelled to seek labour in vain, or if their just pay is perhaps unrighteously withheld, then the Lord hath a controversy in behalf of the lean oxen against the fat and the strong. Again, if an acquaintance, such as man was intended to gain, with all the resources of herb and drug and mineral in nature is made the minister of a mere selfish luxury, or of self-destroying vice, it becomes the knowledge of good turned to evil; and if large portions of the earth are unnecessarily, from wantonness, ignorance, or idleness, suffered to run waste, there remains an account, which the Master of the household exacts in a method of his own. So, again, of those faculties and powers almost creative, which have their root in the more disciplined energies of the human mind. What limits need we assign to art, embodying in visible outline the boldest imaginings and purest aspirations of the heart; or to science, gazing on the works of God, and enabling daily his reasonable children to fulfil their mission, of subduing the earth, and setting all things under their feet? Let us boldly answer, *None*; save only that limit, at which any one of such powers becomes rebellious against the living God, or forgetful of his righteous law, that to whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required.

It is not, as some would persuade us, any existence in the world, or any capacity in the cultivation of man's mind, which prevents us from saying, as much to-day as when creation dawned, "God looks upon every thing that He has made, and behold it is very good." Whatsoever the Lord pleases, that He does in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places. He made great whales, the terror of the deep; and the lions, roaring after their prey, praise him in their own fashion. He made summer and winter. Praise the Lord, oh my soul; and all that is within me, praise his holy name.

But the one great disturber, and the sower of the tares in our corn-field, is that one thing which is diversely named,—the great enemy; the devil; sin; disobedience; unbelief; an evil heart; forgetfulness of the living God. With this disease mankind are sick; and He who cures it is the great Physician. Not but that He might leave in the world many things not altogether consistent with that indolent and imaginative kind of optimism upon which some human dreamers would have organised creation. It was a wise man who said, "Consider the work of God; who can make straight what He has made crooked?" Probably striving is a condition of life; a something, without which we should no longer live. Thus, even if mankind were not fallen, that aspect of things which is good in the sight of God, might be not attractive to those who coveted merely ease. Yet of one truth, brethren, we may be unalterably convinced. Whatever possible hardships, or trials, it may be conceived that the wisdom of God would have in any case

employed to educate his children, they sink positively into nothing, when balanced against the misery which we bring upon ourselves, by wilfully transgressing his holy law. Take the world as it stands. Many a misfortune may befall a man; loss of wealth, of health, of friends; or the prospect of his own death. Yet in all these things he may be more than conqueror. The spirit of the man, or the Spirit of God with him, may sustain his infirmity. He may learn the blessedness which belongs to the meek and poor in spirit; he may find that it was good for him to have been afflicted; he may believe his friends to have been taken away from the evil to come; and he may enter himself, in sober calmness, upon that valley of the shadow of death, in which the rod and the staff of his Saviour comfort him.

My brethren, it is not these natural things which poison the cup of life; it is the unnatural depravity, the vice, and the sin of man. To quote the words of a great master-builder of the walls of Zion in our own times—"It is not these things which work the bitter discomfort, but it is some form of sin. It is thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord. It is sin. It may be the sin of slander, which has set one neighbour against the other; or the sin of pride, which has made one lord it over the other; or the sin of envy, which has made one disparage the other; or the sin of lying, which has made one distrust the other; or the sin of cunning, which has made one suspicious of the other; or the sin of idleness, which has made one disappoint or starve the other; or the sin of covetousness, which has made one pinch the

other; or the sin of ingratitude, which has made one harden his heart against the other; or the sin of drunkenness, which has overclouded many an intellect; or the sin of improvidence, which has clothed whole families with rags; or the sin of uncleanness, which has brought rottenness into their bones. These have been, not only the sins, but the avenging furies, among mankind. It is not the disasters which enter into men's houses, but the devils which have entered into men's hearts, by which they are most fatally undone<sup>1</sup>."

When once then we apprehend sin, or doing wrong against the law of God, to be the greatest cause of misery in the world, we shall understand clearly how the works of our Saviour are also signs. That is, they will be works with a meaning; or parables quite as much as miracles. For, is it not a significant thing, that both to the cripple by the pool of Bethesda, and to the sick of the palsy who was brought to Him, He first offers the forgiveness of sins, as a kind of prelude to the healing of their disease. He only, who takes away the sins of the world, can take away the diseases of our body and our mind. But many of you know the Hebrew for the word *to forgive*, means also, *to take away*. Therefore must that sin, which so easily besets men, no longer remain with them. The burden of it cannot truly go, until the love of it, the sinful willingness to bow under its yoke, be also put away far from us.

But now comes the saddest, or at least to my own mind it appears the thing most full of despondency, in all our story. In former ages of the world, if men

<sup>1</sup> Blunt's University Sermons.

acknowledged sin to be evil<sup>1</sup>, they made efforts to avoid it. They knew that the wages of sin is death. Even when they found difficulty, they still struggled against it. Like an old Pagan is made to say, "I hate these limbs, and this frail servant, my body, which deserts my spirit at its need," so it was once the general doctrine of all mankind, among whom conscience had not been extinguished, that the body and its appetite should obey the spirit, and that the spirit should be guided by the command and the breath of God; and that no sacrifice was too dear for this grand end of bringing all things into obedience to the work which our Heavenly Father appointed them do. But in our own time, we have learnt to call ourselves sick, and we make the acknowledgement of our sickness an excuse for never striving to be well. Instead of magnetising the mind, by giving a determined force to its moral resolves, we even enfeeble it by our treatment. Just like some listless invalid, who calls out for delicate living and indulgence, when bark and steel, and cold bathing and early rising, are what his constitution requires, so the great mass of sinners can discourse ingeniously of the fall of man, the corruption of our nature, the mercies of our redemption, and justification by faith; and they make all these things an opiate for

<sup>1</sup> "The philosophers of old began all their virtue in a total renunciation of the spirit of this world. . . . But the doctrine of the Cross is yet professed by some, who are in more friendship with the world than was allowed to the disciples of Pythagoras, &c. &c. Nay, if those ancient sages were to start up amongst us with their divine wisdom, they would bid fair to be treated by the sons of the Gospel . . . as dreaming enthusiasts."—*Preface to Thomas à Kempis, by the Translator, John Payne, in Dr Chalmers's edition.*



the conscience. They pervert them into an excuse for throwing the care of their souls on some higher power, not mortifying any sin, not restraining or mastering any impulse, and certainly not working out their salvation with fear and trembling. How then are they making their calling and election sure? We tell them, they are spiritually diseased; *they fully assent*. Make haste then and be cured. Ah! that is the business of the physician. But at least come to him. It is of no use, he must come to us; we confess ourselves helpless. But, oh! you who are thus committing a slow suicide, (for what is your conduct but suicidal?) the great Physician of souls has already said to each of us, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." Arise in the power of that God, who raises the dead, and gives energy to the palsied will; and say boldly, "I can do all things, through the Lord God that strengtheneth me." This is alike the great problem of our salvation, and the gift of God, instead of letting flesh and blood say to us, "You shall, and you must;" to say for ourselves, "We can, and we will."

It is generally, indeed, pretended, that the *will* of the sinner is on the side of God's law and of life eternal. Nor is this altogether improbable. Rather indeed, it must be partly so, if the man still retains any trace of what can alone be called true humanity. If the *will* were deliberately gone over to choose the devil's side, then the sinner would be quite fallen into the state of those darker spirits, which say, "Evil, be thou my good." But the case is not usually so. I appeal to any body's own experience, whether the will of every human being not utterly depraved, does not still choose the good.

St Paul, indeed, bears clear witness: "To will," he says, "is present with me; but how to perform that which I would, I find not." There is not however that determination of will which forces a way; nor sufficient trust in God's opening a way for us; and so circumstance entangles, and temptation overcomes the man.

Now, brethren, this complaint of not being able to perform that which our conscience would, is no new one, but as old as mankind. To escape from this disease, has been not only the desire, but the enduring struggle of the noblest spirits among all nations. The ancient and approved remedy was to strive against it, even with oriental<sup>1</sup>, or Essene mortification, or with Greek intensity of thought, or with Roman sternness, and with an unbending virtue. When our Saviour Christ appeared in the flesh, he put fresh strength into the hearts of all strivers in this holy cause, by revealing to them clearly that God was on their side: and, if God was for them, who could be against them? Yet, be it ever remembered, Jesus Christ most earnestly said; "Strive ye." He did not therefore dispense with the necessity of striving. Now the most aggravated disease of our own time, is, that men have seized upon these two things; 1st, the acknowledgement of human weakness, which is assumed on all hands as the foundation of our need for the Gospel; and 2nd, the assurance of divine help in all our struggles, which is the animating principle of our religion: and they have partly made these

<sup>1</sup> Mr De Quincy's notion that the Essenes are post-Christian, is a verdict against clear evidence. But even the Bauddha and Pythagorean discipline would be a difficulty for his semi-Judaism.

two truths a substitute for conscientiousness, and partly turned them into reasons, either for a guilty self-indulgence, or for a despondent and listless apathy: they say in practical effect, mankind is sinful; therefore we cannot help being sinners. But let such men be warned, that the great Searcher of hearts, and the unsparing Judge of every secret word and action, will not be so mocked. They say themselves most truly, that it is "by grace we are saved;" but they infer most falsely, *either*, that grace is not given to every man; *or*, that it is not taken away from every one who abuses it. But who, then, are saved by grace? Is it the lying and the false of heart, the quarrelsome, the backbiters, perverse, malignant: the gluttonous and the drunken, men sensual, not having the spirit of holiness? Or is it rather those, who having believed the kingdom of heaven to be a pearl costly beyond all price, go their way, and determine to count nothing that the world, the flesh, and the devil can offer them, as for one moment to be compared with the blessedness of the pure in heart, the blessedness of seeing God? Undoubtedly, these two classes of persons cannot expect to dwell together; the gulf between their destinies must be as wide as the gulf between their characters. If then the righteous "scarcely be saved by grace,"—if it requires all the love of God, and the death of Christ, and the manifold operation by all natural channels of the Holy Spirit, and all pains on part of the righteous who are so led—inasmuch that prayers, tears, self-denial, uprightness, truthfulness, and all holy charity, are the characteristics of the history of all the saints in all ages—if all these things, my friends, are required, and

if with all these, by God's grace and by man's striving, the righteous be scarcely saved;—*where* then shall they who have trifled with God's grace, and never learnt what striving means, appear in that day, when he shall arise to shake terribly the earth? Where then the practical Antinomian? where, the speakers of the Word, and not doers of it? where those, who have turned round to lie in some favourite sin, like a palsied man, sinking helpless upon his bed, because they would not hear the everlasting Physician, saying time after time to their conscience, "Arise, shake thy sin from thee, and walk, by the grace of God, in newness of life."

Think of these things for yourselves. Try to penetrate the mystery of the wonder-working power of a resolute will, when braced by faith in the all-encompassing grace of God. One strong prayer out of the deep of the mind, one manly resolve, with a fixed determination not to be palsied by those sins from which Christ came to set us free, might become a crisis in any man's destiny. We are on the threshold of a season, when men are especially reminded to repent. Take a serious hour alone, and with prayer, to discover what is your besetting sin. That is the palsy of your soul. Then determine, with steadfast will, to shake it from you, and hear the Son of God still saying, as of old; "Arise, take up thy bed and walk<sup>1</sup>."

LAMPETER, *Quinquagesima Sunday, Feb. 6, 1853.*

<sup>1</sup> This sermon should not be judged as a complete treatise on its subject, but rather as an attempt to enforce a particular idea, and as likely to be balanced by others; else its tone would seem to myself too hard.

## SERMON XI.

### *CASTING OUT DEVILS.*

*Why could we not cast him out?* St Mark ix. 28.

MANY persons think, that, when we read in the New Testament of men being possessed by devils, we ought to understand the words in what is conceived to be their most literal sense; that is to say, that each sufferer was possessed by an evil spirit, which should in each case be considered as distinct a personal agent as the human being over whom he tyrannized. Again, on the other hand, many sober inquirers conceive the above view to be open to strong objections, both as regards the nature of the evidence on which it rests, and the moral conclusion to which it leads. They observe, that all language must be interpreted according to the general habits and conceptions of the persons using it; that the phrase "demoniac possession" was commonly current in the ancient world, to denote any violent form of disease, such as we now term epilepsy, or mania; that manifest traces of this usage are found in Greek medical writers; and then they conceive that our Saviour, instead of entering on a hopeless argument with the delusions of a maniac, removes by his gracious power the very disease

which was misinterpreted. The conclusion will then be, that the words put by the sacred writers in the mouths of supposed evil spirits are merely the distorted utterances of a shattered and blinded mind; while the acceptance by our Saviour of this popular view of the case will be merely an accommodation (such as we often find) of his own language and gesture to the usages of his country and his time.

Such are two views of the matter, between which it will not be necessary for me this morning to pronounce any opinion. The discussion is probably one, in which men will generally take different sides, according as they feel bound by the letter of Holy Scripture, or justified in endeavouring to discover its meaning.

But, in any case, we shall most profitably adapt the words of our text to our own time and our own edification, by applying them in a sense purely moral.

Why could not we cast out sin? becomes often a question of painful interest, and may be asked earnestly of ourselves, and of all those who are capable of aiding us with advice, and not least of our Father which is in Heaven. Perhaps the first and most general reason why we fail to cast out any evil habit may be called pure thoughtlessness. Men do not think sufficiently to know what they are doing, or consider how they stand towards their Maker and their Judge. This was the complaint which the prophet of old put into the mouth of Jehovah: "Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider." As if it had been impossible for them to consider truly who had borne them all the days of their lives, and who invited them to talk with Him as

with an everlasting friend, yet still to turn aside into sins, which must be as a thick cloud between the gaze of their minds and Him who is All-merciful, yet All-holy.

We meet people every day who are thus inconsiderate. You can therefore make no impression upon them. Very frequently also this want of thoughtfulness is accompanied by a persuasion, that all which is said on the subject of religion does not really deserve so much attention as is claimed for it. Such a persuasion will be one of the most common forms of unbelief by which we are prevented from casting out any bad habit. If a man believes that, after all, the satisfaction of his bodily desires is the principal thing, and that to carry himself comfortably through life, or to multiply the number of his own enjoyments, is of more practical consequence than all our discussions about the soul, and its compliance with the will of God, and its prospects throughout eternity,—then he does not believe in one thing being needful above all, or in the pearl of a pure conscience being a pearl beyond all price,—nor can he be awakened to cast out whatever evil humours have taken possession of his soul, or whatever evil habits have usurped, against this lawful King, the dominion of his mind.

But the unbelief here spoken of is especially that kind of practical unbelief, which perhaps has no speculative doubts, for it never speculated at all upon so solemn a subject, but which thinks the whole consideration may be postponed, or is rather the business of particular classes, or at least is not so important as the

business of enjoying one's self, or making one's way in life. The persons, now in my mind's eye, are not the worst sort of men. They are seldom hypocritical or malignant—they are often kind, useful in their vocation, and not disagreeable—until something provokes them—they may be called, as it were, animal men. The forces of life are strong in them. There is something jocund, and almost refreshing, in the easy activity with which they force themselves through a crowd, like children or like wild creatures of the forest, with their thoughts undisturbed by all the terrible questions which vex whoever has had opened in him the deeper fountains of our humanity. The intellect, in its deeper stage, as applied to “What ought I to do?” and “Why have I not done it?” has been scarcely awakened in them; still less have the determining powers of the conscientious will been strengthened with new life, from a sense of true subordination to the highest will of Him by whose strength we are enabled to tread temptations under our feet. Generally speaking men thus informed will not have had the advantage of an early training into child-like reverence or godly fear; while their whole character shews they have not been roused into strong emotion with reference to things unseen; thus, having neither what God ordained as the most blessed rule, nor what he often mercifully permits as a substitute for it, they are like animals never broken, or like plants with sufficient light to live, but with no sunshine to bring out their capacity of flowering and of bearing fruit.

One willingly would hope, that such persons were made by God for some good purpose. Yet it is im-



possible not to see that for all the highest ends of religion they practically live in vain. Whatever may be the vices of their neighbourhood, or the temptations of their stage of life, they invariably give way to them. They see, in fact, no reason why they should not—they have no self-determining power; they have never taken habitually the will of a heart-searching God for the guide of their thoughts, and the test of their motives; while as for such language as, “like the hart panteth after the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,”—they listen to it, and suppose it is right, because it is in the Bible; but as for its being an expression of thoughts which day by day are stirring in the breasts of thousands of human beings, they confess that such a notion is beyond their comprehension.

That such a state of mind, however, is not really a natural one, or that it is not the idea stamped by God upon mankind, is manifest from the many means which He has afforded to us of attaining to something higher. Many things tend to waken man out of a merely animal indifference to the world beyond the grave. Even the recoil of his own passions, the sense of shame which follows quick upon transgression, and the unsatisfactoriness which men of all ages and opinions have confessed to be the result of a selfish devotion to pleasure, all do something towards turning him from an idolatry of things on earth, to an apprehension of the great God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Nor again, is grand scenery<sup>1</sup>, from its power of awakening

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Christian Year*, 20th Sunday after Trinity, and 1st Sunday after Epiphany.

profound emotion, altogether destitute of a tendency in the same direction. But perhaps yet more lively monitors may be found in the experiences of daily life; in joy, and in sorrow, in sharing the sympathies of our brother men; in familiarity with the records of great deeds and high aspirations of old; in weeping with them who weep, and in praying, as those who have gone before us in the faith have prayed; and generally, in those influences, by which God teaches us, through fear, through love, through experience either of solitude or of sympathy, how closely we stand bound, both to Himself and to all around us, as fellow-heirs of eternal life. Happy are those from whom, by such means, God casts out early the devil of indifference, so that they learn by the experience of others rather than by guilt and pain of their own. Happy are they, if the law is their schoolmaster, by teaching them the beauty of right rather than the penalty of wrong; and if their faith is so true and so tender, that they believe sin ought to be avoided and God feared, before they have learnt it so by bitter suffering. Nor let it be forgotten, such men are really the best men. Thy servant hath feared the Lord from his youth up, is the character of the man we can most safely trust. Bishop Hall is somewhere deservedly severe upon those who disparage an early and a natural growth of piety, as if it were likely to turn out ill. Perhaps in the tone of our popular teaching, when we desire to magnify the mercy of God to the penitent thief, we are too apt to speak as if his end had been as securely blest as that of the beloved disciple. But without desiring to limit the mercies of God, we

may surely prefer the consistent faith of King Josiah to the late repentance of Manasseh; and we may consider the life-long godliness of Samuel a safer preparation for eternity than the dubious repentance of Felix, or the suicidal remorse of Judas.

And yet if the greater blessedness of fearing the Lord early has not befallen any one, blessed also is he who is able, in any hour of life, to turn away from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right. Not without fear and trembling can such a change be expected to take place. If any man's eyes are fully opened for the first time to the brutish manner in which he has cast the mercies of God behind his back, and smothered in himself all the secret promptings of conscience or of grace, which haunt us from our childhood upward, it must necessarily be that such a light gleams upon him with terror, and such a burthen bows him with shame. He once perhaps thought that whatever he did wrong was an excusable impulse of nature; he now reflects with self-condemnation, that all along there was a secret voice of a better nature within his soul, which entered a protest, ever audible to the pure in heart. He once perhaps flattered himself that God must necessarily forgive; he now observes with terror, how inevitably throughout earth and heaven all things are pregnant with their proper consequences: the seed bears fruit; the thought ripens into action; the sin, when it is fully wrought, bringeth forth death. Or perhaps he once thought that the principal use of the Bible was to condemn the Jews, or to furnish arguments against idolatry, to which he felt himself no sort of temptation.

But now, he remembers those fierce threatenings of the prophets, which speak alike to every child of Adam, and which are never so terrible as when they denounce woe upon religious people; or when they vindicate the justice of God, by declaring him to be a searcher of the heart and reins, and not a clearer of the guilty, but that the soul which sinneth it shall die.

There may however, brethren, be a fear unto death; and such a fear, as well as the unbelief of indifference above spoken of, may prevent us from casting out the evil spirit of alienation from God. A man, indeed, is only too ready to believe before he commits a sin, that it is sure to be forgiven. But that is exactly the time he ought to believe nothing of the kind. For then he does not see the evil in its true colours, and he requires every possible terror to magnify it sufficiently. But when that fear of the Lord, which is clean, has brought him true repentance, he then finds it difficult to believe that his sin can be put away and his iniquity covered. For he now rightly reasons, the thing was hateful; contrary to the law of God; opposed to the better instincts of my own conscience; unworthy in itself, and aggravated by all the warnings I have enjoyed: I feel ashamed at thinking what any good man would say, who could either read the record of my past life or observe exactly what passes in my heart: what then must be the sentence of that All-holy One who chargeth his angels with folly? How shall I stand in his sight? This reasoning of self-condemnation is so correct in every step that it is not easy to answer it. The ordinary, and perhaps the necessary consequence of a true repentance,

after a long course of forgetfulness of God our Saviour, must be and ought to be, something of despondency. It is not practically true that the scars which sin leaves upon the soul can be lightly healed. A man may be abundantly assured of the infinite mercy of God; yet so long as his conscience tells him that the dispositions which led him wrong are not changed for the better, but rather confirmed or tainted by practice,—so long (if indeed his repentance be a genuine one) he must feel an insuperable difficulty in bringing his fallen mind into reconciliation with that, of which we most emphatically feel, that it is omniscient, and essentially holy. How then are two such things to be united? It is well if the just appreciation of so great a difficulty does not drive the imperfect penitent into despair; if it does not induce him to break away more precipitately from that ever calm, yet most awful presence, for which he feels that he has rendered himself unfit.

If any of us have ever to advise a man in this stage of repentance, we cannot in the first instance do better than urge him to pray earnestly. Prayer is itself an effort. Nor, if the repentance be a true one, will a man's own feelings fail to make his prayer consist chiefly of confession. The unburdening of the heart is half the battle. We see this partly in the difficulty which every spoiled child has in confessing a fault, as well as in the relief which he finds from doing it; and partly again, in that ancient penitent, who went down to his house, comparatively (at least) forgiven, having said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Yet, if guilty men are not aware of the necessity of confession, at least to

God, and wherever just restitution requires it, also to men, it is the duty of ministers of religion to use all faithfulness in reminding them. Nor, again, need we be too hasty in drying the tears, which with some kinds of temperament accompany the prayer of confession. We read at least of one who let fall upon the feet of the Saviour drops more precious in his sight than that costly spikenard, which yet, as a true token of love, he did not disdain.

There is one more, and that the greatest, instrument of relief. It appears almost born out of that extremity of self-condemnation, approaching to despair, in which a true penitent fancies himself to discover more clearly what he already knew, that if he is to be saved, his salvation must be the gift of God. For then he recognises in himself nothing worth offering: but kneeling down in remembrance of the death of Christ, he both associates himself, in feeling and in sacrament, with the one spotless offering, by which the whole ends of the earth may be saved, and also beseeches the Father to give him daily more of that Holy Spirit, by which the sacrifice of Christ was acceptable, and by which we become partakers of his sonship, if we follow his example in godly life. Thus he lays his own iniquities, as he also offers his own contrition, upon the head of the seape-goat, or of that Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world. Nor indeed, brethren, is there any limit or stint to the measure, in which, upon true repentance, we may proclaim the love of God, as manifesting itself in what was anciently called the forgiveness of sins. In modern times we have somewhat encumbered the doctrine by

controversial refinements. But the essential truth remains the same, that God of his unspeakable goodness is ever ready to receive whoever will return unto him; and not only this, brethren, but he helps us all along the rugged road of repentance, by the consciousness of an everlasting love being on our side; he thus stimulates the languid forces of the human soul by the assurance of an unseen ally, even though that ally is, by the necessity of his righteousness, also our judge: thus, in the language of suffering Job, he does not plead with us with his great power, but he puts strength into us. Let this fulness, then, of the love of God, as especially revealed by His only-begotten Son, be to every mind not utterly hardened, the last and greatest instrument of casting out the evil humour of earthly despair, or alienation from God, and of holding up our steps in the way of peace.

But, once more: we also read of an evil spirit, which might be compared to a strong man cast out by a stronger, taking unto himself seven other spirits, and returning, and the last end of a man who had been saved by divine grace becoming worse than the first. For, in truth, the very sense of security has a danger of its own. Like the people who had been saved through the Red Sea out of Egypt provoked God and were overthrown in the wilderness, so Christians are in danger of thinking, that because the salvation on God's part is entire they need no longer work it out with sober fear. Perhaps they think they can repent again. But the work of repentance, which was never easy, becomes more and more difficult after every great fall. It seems to be written

in the constitution of every human soul, that it can only have a certain number of opportunities granted to it. There are evil spirits of presumption, of backsliding, of doing what is right in our own eyes, of irreverence, the child of familiarity, and of a garrulous unreality in taking all holy words and things in vain. Such things as these make men relapse, through conceit, or through indifference, into utter irreligion. Who shall deliver us from these dangers? Do they not beset us daily as things which call for the utmost vigilance, patience, and self-discipline? Is it not probable such as these are sins to which our Saviour's words will apply, "This kind can come out by nothing but by prayer and fasting"? I have left myself no room either to explain at length the idea implied in these words, which immediately follow our text, or to guard that idea against the exaggerations and perversions to which in other countries, rather than in our own, it may perhaps be exposed. But every one present will probably feel that our Saviour meant something true, and something which (after all allowance for change of circumstances) should still be had in remembrance by Christians. Will you then consider what he did mean? whatever you conceive it ought to be called, whether self-discipline, self-denial, or temperance in all things, or however else you interpret our Saviour's words, begin to put in practice your own most deliberate version of their meaning. It is not a contemptible power to be able, if we think it right, to say "No" to any favourite inclination. A modern writer thus expresses himself: "Though some kinds of mortification, such as violent fasting, have a tendency, by weak-



ening and making feverish the body, to render men more liable to yield to other kinds of temptation, yet it is certain, that to be able to say *No* to the appetites is no bad preparation for future and severer combats." "But" (he proceeds) "let this discipline not be that of the athlete, who exercises his strength in useless exertions, merely to increase it, but that of the husbandman, who labours to some good end, and thus at the same time preserves his bodily health and strength. Instead then of fasting rigorously, as an exercise in abstinence, deny yourself some luxury pleasing to your palate, and devote the money thus saved to some good purpose. So, instead of scourging your body, discover some dangerous habit or tendency, and mortify it by absolute refusal to gratify it, until it shall disappear. Cultivate the habit of doing right even in little things, paying slight regard to custom, fashion, the opinion of men; and the religious will, which can conquer these obstacles, will be better prepared to resist that yet more powerful enemy within, corrupt appetite, or stormy passion."

Thus far the words of our author, which appear to me not amiss. My only object is gained if you will suffer yourselves to be reminded, that every restored penitent must take heed lest again a worse thing befall him; that, after all, there is such a virtue as self-denial; that men who deny themselves nothing that is pleasant, are in danger of some day denying themselves nothing that is sinful, and that, as on the one hand, the wisest masters of holy living have taught us to be in "fastings oft" is a great instrument of spiritual vision, or of making high advances in religious knowledge; so on the other, we see daily

instances of men subject to all evil passions, of which it is at least worth considering, whether they can come out by anything but by prayer and fasting. Nor, with these words, will it be useless to compare that other warning from the most solemn hour of our Lord in agony. When He found even his three chosen disciples sleeping by the side of his own dread suffering, "Watch ye," he said, "and pray;" for though the spirit, that is, the conscience touched by the grace of God, may appear willing, yet "the flesh," that is, the mass of all our lower humours and impulses, may render your soul so weak that it may slumber even in Gethsemane; or it may desert its Master as He bears his cross up Calvary; or, last and worst, it may suffer all evil spirits to return, so that neither man nor God can any longer cast them out.

LAMPETER, *2nd Sunday in Lent, Feb. 20, 1853.*

## SERMON XII.

*BEING FORSAKEN OF GOD.*

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*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Psalm xxii. 1.

EVEN in English we often designate a hymn or a poem by merely quoting its first line. Such was also the case in Latin, since we find the words *Arma virumque* used as a title for the *Æneid*. A similar practice appears to have prevailed still more generally among the Hebrews; for the various books of the Old Testament are commonly designated by the first words of each. The book of Genesis, for instance, is known as "In the beginning," and so on. Hence it becomes not at all improbable that the words of my text might be used in the New Testament as the title of the Psalm, of which they are written at the beginning; and for this reason, among others, it has been supposed, in modern times, that when we are told of our Lord's repeating "Eloi, Eloi," &c. we should understand him to have uttered aloud the whole of the twenty-second Psalm. The question is one of sufficient interest to be worth looking at distinctly. Perhaps the only considerable objection is, that the original words given by the

Evangelist are not quite the same as those of the Psalm. For instance, *sabacthani*, although it corresponds in sense, is not the word for "thou hast forsaken me" which we read in our Old Testament. This circumstance may appear almost fatal to our theory. But, on the other hand, it may be answered, that the principal point of difference gives the Chaldee equivalent for the Hebrew; that our Lord, to whom the mixed idiom of the Syriac was probably his vernacular tongue, might naturally cite a verse of the Old Testament in a form somewhat different from that of the original manuscript; and, indeed, that the most ancient Hebrew text was not at that time very generally familiar, may be rather indicated by the misapprehension of some bystanders, who conceived our Lord to be calling upon Elias. The same circumstance of the Hebrew texts not being in every one's mouth, is still farther illustrated by the fact, that many of the New Testament citations are made from the Greek version of the Septuagint, if not also by the great laxity, and even discrepance, which appears in St Stephen's summary of the patriarchal history, when compared with the account in the book of Genesis.

Perhaps, then, our blessed Lord may really have cited the Psalm, taken possibly from some Chaldaic variation, without using the precise words of the Old Testament; or, again, his citation may not be syllable for syllable reported by the Evangelists; though this latter possibility (as regards so awfully striking an event) is too faint to be seriously urged. But, upon the whole, our opinion of the probability of the supposition

which we are discussing, must be determined by the degree in which the Psalm is strikingly appropriate, or the contrary, when applied to the position of our Saviour upon the cross.

On this ground, then, it is likely that the feeling and the judgment of every Christian reader will incline to pronounce in the affirmative. For, if any person, who may never happen to have considered the Psalm in this light before, will only read it over with an eye to the circumstances of that redeeming tragedy which was enacted on Calvary, he will probably be struck by the fresh significance which many of the verses will assume.

Nor yet, in order to institute such a comparison, is it necessary to deny, that the original writer of the Psalm had probably quite a different, and a more temporal meaning. We have had too much of sneers at the obstinacy of the Jews, because they cannot admit interpretations, which (like St Paul's<sup>1</sup> of Hagar and Mount Sinai) are in a certain sense true, but which, when tortured into literal explications of the text, utterly break down. In almost every disputed prophecy, the critical probabilities of the literal and primary sense are far more in favour of the Jewish opinion, or of something like it, than they are in favour of the Christian. Most truly was it said by Bishop Middleton, (no mean or heterodox authority,) that unless you admit a primary historical sense, you make everything in the Old Testament [as] uncertain [as a dream.] And although the rugged strength of

<sup>1</sup> For the origin of St Paul's parable of Hagar see Philo's tract, *De Cong. Quæer. erud. grat.*

Horsley affected at one time to deride the notion of a double sense, he felt subsequently obliged to confess that he had been too hasty in his opinion. The same concession is made to some extent by Davison, in his work on Prophecy, and generally by our more accurate divines. But I conceive we do not ordinarily on this point do justice to the Jews.

It is true, that the prophets frequently looked forward to they knew not what salvation, which the anointed Messenger, the future Restorer of Israel, was to bring. But it is also true, that events or persons of their own times most commonly suggested to them their glowing images—images, of which the highest significance can only be found in the spiritual fulfilment, which we contend they have now received. Isaiah, for instance, speaks of a child who should be born in a time of famine, when all the plains were overrun by the hosts of Syria and Ephraim, and the vine of the hill-country extorted the price of dearth. This child, he says, of a marriage only now taking place, shall, as soon as he is able to distinguish good and bad, eat butter and honey; and this either as a sign of dearth, because the corn and wine will have been swept away; or again, as a sign of reviving peace and plenty, for so ample will be the abundance restored by the Lord to his people, that the vines, now so costly, shall be counted as briers; the pastures shall be thronged with cattle; the infant of two years old shall eat every pastoral delicacy; for the two firebrands of the hostile kings shall be quenched; the beard of the enemy's pride shall be shaven by that Assyrian king, who (though blas-

phemous in conquest) is still as it were the raser of Jehovah. In either case the thing immediately predicted is the Assyrian overthrow of the nearer enemies of Judah, before the child should be two years old.

Again, the same Isaiah sees that Israel, whom God had called out of Egypt, and whom the Eternal had denominated his first-born, trampled, captive, and derided; he sees the beauty of the sanctuary defiled, and the anointed priests of the living God degraded from their office, led as sheep to the slaughter, insulted by their own countrymen, as men smitten of God, cast off by Jehovah. Ah! he says, it is through the wickedness of the nations that Israel is thus afflicted; it is through the apostasy of the people that the priesthood is thus smitten and reviled; they hide their faces from the Lord's servant; nevertheless, no weapon that is formed against him shall prosper: it is a little thing that He should merely recover Israel, He shall also be a light to the Gentiles, and a salvation to the ends of the earth.

Even so our Psalmist, whether it were David or some one else, is probably speaking of the personified Israel. His fathers had trusted in God, and had been delivered; but he is a worm, and no man; the confederacy of the heathen layeth siege to him; they already cast lots for their booty: his only consolation is in the distant hope, that the kindreds of the earth will remember themselves, and all nations be turned to the Lord.

The proper position of the Christian divine, then, is, not that the Jewish interpretation of their own

prophecies is untrue, but that it is inadequate. As far as it goes, it is right. But, if this be all, then has their faith failed them. There is only one King of their race, who is even now ruling over many nations; nor is any other ever likely to do so. There is only one medium, and that medium not the law of Moses, through which all the nations of the earth are being turned to Jehovah. There has been only one child, born of a virgin, who has so delivered mankind from the spiritual dearth of something to believe upon, as to be emphatically and properly Emmanuel, God with us. There is only one, and he too a priest, both smitten through the iniquity of the people, and yet through whose stripes his very smiters are healed. Nor, once more, is there any other save one, of whom indeed Israel, as God's first-born, was no mean type; who had been taken in some emphatical sense out of his mother's womb; who had also been called out of Egypt; but who was reduced in agony, too awful to be traced, to exclaim from the tree which was deemed accursed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet who, even in that hour of pain and reproach, remembered to care for those whom He loved; felt power within him to assure the malefactor of pardon; and, we would willingly believe, completed the song of the cross in the tone of triumph. From this hour, "all the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord.....For the kingdom is the Lord's: my seed shall serve him, they shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation."



We see how it is no longer written of those who are born of flesh and blood, the children of Abraham; but, to as many as receive him, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. Hence it is written, "My seed shall serve him; they shall come, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, unto a people that shall be born, whom the Lord hath made."

Now we know whose righteousness the heavens declare, and whose people are born of water and of the Spirit; may God also teach us to exemplify what kind of humanity it is that the Lord makes in the place of the old Adam, in whosoever does not quench the teaching of his grace.

With regard, then, to the Psalm before us, as well as the greater part of the Old Testament prophecies, if by "inspiration" we mean a minute foreknowledge on part of the writer, of earthly things and circumstances removed far from his own age, a thorough comparison of the prophecy with the event may tend rather to lessen our conception of the degree in which that faculty existed: but, on the other hand, it may even deepen our sense of the true prophetic inspiration, as a clear perception of those heavenly truths which the Holy Ghost reveals to man as the abiding thoughts of God, which ever repeat themselves in his eternal plan; and moreover, it may give us a far higher idea of the over-ruling providence of the Almighty, as controlling the drama of the religious history of mankind. For it may lead us to consider many things in the Old Testament as being not so much predictions as pictures by way of forecast, and not so much anticipations by human

foresight, as representations foreshadowed by heaven in the form of events.

Be it, then, that the writer of our Psalm meant to depict the suffering of his nation. Yet if Israel had become a worm, and an outcast of the people, at least he was not more so than the Only-begotten, of whom they said, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Did the passers by laugh the anointed successor of David to scorn? Even so mocked they the Lord of Life upon the cross. Was even the lofty hope of Sion an additional reason for triumph over her? So said the Pharisee and the Scribe, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Surely not in the city of Jerusalem so much as in the person of her Master, it is eminently realised, "they pierced my hands and my feet." *His* garments are parted; upon *His* vesture lots are cast. In short, what had been true of Israel, is more eminently true of Israel's Messiah; the tale of the people's sufferings may be told emphatically of those of the King. The shadow may precede, but the body follows. The members have their share, but the Head has in all things the pre-eminence.

Since then, brethren, no other than our Lord and Master uttered that exceeding bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" it is credible that to him the prophetic utterance points; of him the Psalm is, in a way, spoken. Upon him then came not only the hour of agony in the garden, not only the desertion, the scourging, and the sinking under the cross, but upon his soul fell, together with the shadow of death, the sense of a deeper darkness, the with-

drawal of divine support, the dread solitude of suffering, even in the sight of men and angels, which made him exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But, it may be asked, how could the co-eternal Son, and the *alter ego* (or the express image) of the Father's person, be such a stranger to the consciousness of indwelling divinity, as to feel himself not only stricken of man, but (even as the vulgar deemed him) smitten of God and afflicted. The obvious answer is, that the human nature in which the Wisdom of God tabernacled, for the sake of raising the human by contact with the divine, rendered the personal being susceptible of whatever mankind can suffer.

The question will then, again, assume a fresh form; what is the meaning to ourselves of spiritual desertion? How far can we feel ourselves forsaken of God? There is a difficult, and at the same time an interesting, subject of inquiry. Is then the explanation something of this kind? It has pleased our heavenly Father to give us various faculties, each of which may serve a good end, and requires, in order to happiness, a certain exercise. We all know the nature of hope, fear, love, joy, trust, and other such feelings. We know the dominion which each of them in turn can exercise over our happiness; and just as each muscle and nerve of body requires exercise in order to health, so each of these mental endowments can bring a blessing, when rightly directed; and bane, if it is either sluggish, or turned to some unworthy object. But now, what earthly thing shall satisfy them? Health, strength, wealth, friends.

pleasure, power? Which of them in turn does not fail us at our utmost need? Which, even if permanent, would not leave a void? We require a health for the uneasy restlessness of the mind; a strength to resist impulses which our own better feelings tell us are evil; friends who cannot change or forsake; pleasure which cannot pall, and power at least more capable of being reckoned on than that of a worm. But where shall these things be found? "Surely," says the Psalmist, to Almighty God, "in thy light shall we see light." When we are duly sobered by the fear of God, we need fear nothing else; when we hope in God, that hope alone satisfies us; when we rejoice in doing his will, and walking in his way, our joy is one which no man taketh from us. We have then peace in ourselves; and if in ourselves, also with God. For if our hearts, when duly informed and disciplined, do not condemn us, there is then no condemnation against us. Each man's conscience, provided he does not attach that holy name to passion or to waywardness, is as it were the mirror of the will and the mind of God. And though the images cast on this mirror be, as the Apostle says, figurative, it is the province of faith to assure us, that such figures represent, adequately for our guidance, eternal realities. What we now see in a figure, shall be hereafter face to face.

Now, the more a man is truly enlightened, the more he seeks that peace which flows from such a consciousness as is above described. Nor do I think it necessary to check the childlike freedom which accompanies such an endeavour to be at peace with God, except by one remark.

We must not from such a course *exclude* the reasoning faculty. It may be readily admitted, that our devotion, our hope, and our pious fancy, will often wing their flight beyond the slower pace of dull ratiocination; but they must keep in sight, and in sound of recall. It is our whole being, our understanding as well as our spirit, which the Holy Ghost is pleased to sanctify.

Fear not, then, I say, to seek peace by doing the will of God. Thy will, O God, be done in earth as it is in heaven.

With a conscience calm, with a reason satisfied, with passions subdued, with fear of One only, and him our friend, and that fear made cheerful by the accompaniment of a steadfast hope of an inheritance undefiled, what can injure us? Who shall separate us from the love of God? I am persuaded, even as the Apostle was, that neither earthly pain nor death can avail, save for a moment, to darken over such a joy, or to take away a peace, which passes the understanding alike of the sensual and of the malignant. But from whom, brethren, can such hopes come, save from God? Be it, if any one pleases, that the machinery through which it is raised already existed in our minds. But what architect's hand there raised it? What have we that we have not received? Blessed for ever be His holy name, who both enables us in his light to see light, and giveth us triumph in tribulation, through the consciousness that one stronger than the strong is on our side "My peace I leave with you," saith the Saviour: "not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

But, brethren and friends, there is a darker alterna-

tive. There is a conscience ill at ease; there is a fear looking forward only to judgment; there is a blank, void of hope, that maketh the heart sick when the staff of our reliance is removed; there is a confused tumult of passion; there is a cheerless gloom, approaching to despair. It is in accordance with our Lord's declaration, that unto whom much is given, of him much is required; to believe that here too some previous enlightenment may enhance the sense of darkness. Where men are conscious of having known their master's will, and not having done it; of having worthily conceived the excellence of things godlike, and fallen back upon things meanly carnal; there must be a decay of mental peace, and a want of any thing durable to lean upon in the crisis when things earthly must pass away. How can any man of reflection feel at ease if he is conscious that all is not right in the sight of God; and, in short, aware that he has no friendly relation towards that pure Being, in whose presence alone is life, and compliance with whose will is the true condition of our happiness? Such a man has in fact turned away from God; and in proportion as he has ever been enlightened, he must feel the desolation of a blank gloom, where once had been the cheering sense of compassion and fatherly lovingkindness. What wonder that he almost conceives the change to be in God rather than in himself? that he exclaims, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when it should rather be, "My soul, why hast thou wandered from the giver of thy life, and the upholder of eternal joy?" For God indeed is ever at hand, to forgive, to bless, and to save. It is chiefly our iniquities which draw a thick veil

around us, that we no longer perceive a presence of our eternal Saviour; and, even if we hear his voice, we hide ourselves in the trees of some vain shelter, and are afraid.

Yet, be it noticed, not only sin, but also misfortune, and earthly pain, whether sent for some wise chastening, or whether the inevitable (and, so to speak, *accidental*) condition of our earthly lot, may create that gloomy despondence, in which we no longer see the blessings descending, and forget, or mistrust, that our prayers should ascend to fetch them. The apparent failure of an honest struggle in some great cause will almost tempt to the exclamation of the Roman patriot, when, after worshipping the highest idea of excellence which his imagination could form, he saw it trampled under the usurper's foot, and said, "Ah, ill-fated virtue, it seems then thou art but a shadow, whereas I thought thee a power." So, now the languor of ill-health, and now the absence of sympathy from man, will seem a reflection from the desertion of a higher and holier comforter. Hence, I said, reason must not be left out of sight in any attempt to analyse the causes of our mental distress. Not every cloud brings a storm; nor is the darker night always unfriendly; for it may only prepare us to receive joy that cometh in the morning. So, brethren, of sickness, so of disappointment, so of death. They may possibly be meant to try: be not hasty to believe they were intended to destroy. Rather look up to that Almighty Father, and heavenly Saviour, who has never failed them that sought Him. Remember all the tokens of his lovingkindness; how by birth He blessed, and by adopting us into a Christian church

made us elect unto the means of grace ; how in youth He warned, in travel He shielded, in sickness He raised us on to our feet. Lastly, notice, that He commends his lovingkindness to us, even by this strange and paradoxical proof, that He suffered his only-begotten Son, the coeternal partaker of the Divine Being, to utter aloud that bitter cry which we have now been considering. For if He seemed forsaken of his Father, it was in order that God might not forsake us ; it was to ransom our souls in the hour of death and the day of judgment from the necessity of crying in vain, “ My God, my God.”

Therefore have *hope* in the God and Saviour on whom you have believed ; and, moreover, as you would not be forsaken of him hereafter, so be persuaded not to forsake him now. For now, I say, my brethren, *now*, the same voice of mediation between God and man which entreats our Heavenly Father to deliver us by the agony of his Son and by his cross and passion, simultaneously bids us be of good cheer by his resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. But by the same tokens, even by all our Lord’s sufferings, and all his triumphs, it also urges us to strive to do his will.

Let us not grudge Him who bought us the seeing of the travail of his soul. Let his seed, being born of water which purifies, and the Spirit which sanetifies, truly serve Him, so shall they be counted to the Lord for a generation.

*Preached at LAMPETER in 1851.*

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## SERMON XIII.

### *THE PRAYER ON THE CROSS.*

*Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.*

St Luke xxiii. 34.

WHETHER we consider the speaker of these words, or the occasion on which they were uttered, or the meaning with which they are pregnant, they are among the most remarkable in which thought ever trembled into speech. The speaker, no other than the Only-begotten Son of God ; the occasion, His darkest hour of suffering upon the cross ; the meaning, scarcely less than a practical summary of the religion of Christ.

For here we are approaching the end of that great humility to which our blessed Saviour condescended for our sakes. We have heard of His patience and His sympathy with men of low estate ; we have known Him in whose character no touch of humanity is more vivid than His weeping over the city of His fathers, rejected of His countrymen, and wounded in the house of His friends ; we have shuddered at the terrible mockery of the crown of thorns, while our imagination shrinks from the scourging which accompanied it : we have seen, for who cannot recall with his mind's eye ? the bowing under the cross of shame ; we shall shortly hear that

sharpest cry of the Man of Sorrows, when (not only deserted or disavowed by his followers, but) tasting of the bitterness which sinful man knows in the agony of remorse, He cried aloud, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Yet, at that critical point which intervened between these two stages of suffering, the Saviour of mankind left to all generations an example, in that He prayed to the Father, not for ease, nor for a quick passage into His kingdom; still less for the punishment of His enemies; but, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

If any man wishes to discover the secret of this mind of Christ, he may be reminded of all those expressions of Holy Writ which describe the Saviour's great humility. For to be humble is the secret of the power of forgiving injuries. The more magnificently any man thinks of himself, the greater any offence against him appears, and the more keenly he is tempted to resent it. Nor is that kind of defensive pride, which tends to cherish a delicate sense of honor, a thing without use to human society. Wherever, indeed, it has been extirpated in masses of men, experience shows that one of the ordinary securities for right sentiment has been lost. It is not, however, a safe guide, for two reasons; partly, because it is connected with self esteem, and the idea of self is apt to warp the judgment; partly, again, because all rules of honor are founded upon the opinion of men; but there are higher principles of action than men in general care to be reminded of; so that, without disparaging all the helps and admonitions to do right,

which, under the guidance of Divine providence, human society affords, we still require the power of appeal to a more unbending test, and a more searching judge. It is in the presence of that dread tribunal, before which all hearts are open, and when comparing our own conduct with the inexorable requirements of the law of God, that we learn a wisdom, far humbler of thought and speech than even the most humane courtesy would suggest, and yet far higher in the goal of its ultimate attainment. When we know ourselves, with whatever advantages of knowledge or station the accidents of this life may surround us, to be still but servants of God, we then lay less stress upon mere external distinctions; we go on to consider an offence against ourselves as not greater really than if it were against the humblest of God's creatures; and thus we have less difficulty in forgiving injuries; for who, after all, are we, that we should be angry with our fellow-worm? Or rather, perhaps, it will be better to say, who art thou that art angry with another man's servant? For if we really conceive of ourselves as instruments, in some humble form, of some divine work in the world, we shall have less difficulty in regarding our opponents in any quarrel as also instruments in something analogous. Like the conscious king of Israel, who in the humiliation of his disrowned old age, is represented as saying, "Let Shimei alone; the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David," so we may conceive it possible that the trial of ourselves is only a providential incident in the course of some other; or at any rate, to his own master he standeth or falleth. We at least have received our

task. In proportion as we learn to discharge that task in humility, we shall have less leisure, less temptation, (because less of resentment from pride prompting us,) to retaliate upon any aggressor his insolence or his cruelty. Thus there is nothing incredible in the idea, that a Christian who has made it the business of his life to tread in the steps of his Master, may at length acquire so much of that mind which was in Christ Jesus, as not only to forgive readily, but to make injury a reason for conferring benefit in return. Some such perfection of temper is recorded as having marked Archbishop Cranmer; such a spirit also speaks in the prayer of St Stephen; as, above all, it is exemplified in the words of our text, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." But, wherever such a spirit is attained, it will certainly be connected, not with pride, but as in the case of our Saviour, with a most profound humility. For these had been the characteristics of his previous life; not thinking his being equal with the Divinity a thing to be greedily retained<sup>1</sup>, but taking upon Him the form of a servant, and being obedient to his Master's (as well as his Father's) will, even to the death of the cross.

Secondly, another grand instrument in enabling men to forgive injuries, is knowledge. This will sound strange only to persons who have never reflected upon the subject. For Almighty God would not be the author of truth, nor would his law be the embodiment of the highest wisdom, if to know things as they are did not

<sup>1</sup> See in Eusebius this quotation from the *Philippians*, in the epistle about the martyrs at Lyons, their rendering of it being also confirmed by the sequence of thought.

dispose men in the direction of doing things as they ought. Nor would faith, in the largest sense of the word faith, be an instrument of religious improvement, if it did not enable us to know upon trust, (being thus the best substitute for knowledge) in things, which, as yet, it is impossible to know by experience. But in truth, to know God as our Father, our Saviour, and our Judge, supplies us with the strongest motives we can have to persevere in well-doing. For if we know that He is the highest good; that His will is our happiness; and that in His light we see light, even in the valley of shadows, how should we not be encouraged by such knowledge in the way that leadeth to life eternal?

Nor is it less true, that to know man in all his mistakes, his errors, and his misunderstandings, is both one great safeguard against unreasonable resentment, and also a great assistance in overcoming it, where we feel it with reason. In the first place, an ignorant man is apt to interpret a thousand things as affronts, which were never intended to be so. Or, even if they were, he makes no allowance for the misunderstanding which may have produced them. He is not capable of putting himself into the position of the person erring, or of calculating with proper sympathy upon probable mistakes or natural motives. Whereas, when any one has acquired an intelligent and a sympathising knowledge of human nature, he can enter often into the feelings, and make allowance for the mistaken impulses of people who do wrong. He sees where the origin of the error lies; he can imagine readily in what different lights the same object may be viewed from different points; he

knows also to what kind of temptations each age or station in life is exposed; so that the most direct fruit of his knowledge is a certain large-hearted candour; and from thence there are not many steps to an indulgent mode of viewing offences, which yet in strictness may justly call for some amount of censure.

So that, on the whole, perhaps, no two things can be named so likely to produce a frame of mind, to which a prayer like that of our Saviour on the cross would be congenial, than these two, humility and knowledge. Nor will any one doubt that in these two things He who was both Jesus of Nazareth and the Anointed of God had the Spirit given to him in the most abundant measure. In Him we have divine love condescending, and divine wisdom reading our thoughts long before. If He underwent the sharpness of death, it was not because He wanted power to save his life as well as to lay it down; and if He prayed for St Peter's faith, it was not because He did not foresee the shameful denial. But He who foreknew the sin, knew also the weakness; and probably foreknew the effect in virtue of his understanding the cause. Hence another apostle tells us, that the perpetual Interceder for us at the right hand of God is as it were a high priest who knows (from having borne) our weaknesses. So constantly does the element of knowledge seem to be implied as entering into the composition of sympathy. Nor is the same lesson less manifestly taught us by the very words of our text. We there see that the ground of the Saviour's intercession is his knowledge of the ignorance of his murderers. They knew not what they did. They knew not on how

sacred a form they laid lawless hand; nor what fierce passion clothed itself in the zeal which they professed for the Scripture<sup>1</sup> and inspiration of their law. But probably this ignorance would never have been pleaded at the throne of Heaven, as an excuse in their behalf, by the very person who suffered from it, if that sufferer had not entered largely into the motives of men's hearts, as well as partaken, without stint or measure, in the infinite love of God, who knoweth whereof we are made.

The very excellence of such an example will appear to some persons a reason why it can hardly be held out for imitation. Nor is it pretended that the mass of mankind can be confidently expected to reach such a standard. Perhaps, indeed, it may be almost the duty of the preacher to point out one danger which a very stringent requirement in such a direction would probably involve. It has passed almost into a proverb, that very soft-spoken men are generally dangerous; and this, even where they are not conscious of deliberate hypoerisy. Nor is the reason difficult to point out. Having stifled any expression of irritation by a sort of strain upon their nature, they are tempted to vent their feelings subsequently in some indirect manner. Hence detraction, censoriousness, and even a studied sighing away of their neighbour's character, are apt to be such persons' favourite weapons; and it is very much to be regretted, that the Christian Church should ever fail to visit these disingenuous arts

<sup>1</sup> By the *Law*, for which they were zealous, the Jews meant the Old Testament Scriptures.

with the same stigma by which they would be branded amongst men of the world.

Hence, be it remarked, that, while he is the best Christian, who can from his heart give the speediest and most entire forgiveness, he also who is "angry and sins not" by disingenuousness, is a better man than he who harbours a masked and silently vindictive enmity. If we are offended, let us hasten as soon as possible to exchange forgiveness; but if such a course is forbidden, either by self-defence, or by moral considerations, or even by the depth of a wound not yet closed in our feelings, let us at least beware of uttering words softer than butter, with war in our heart. We should not, for example, say, "I entertain no unkind feeling towards the man; but I fear he is guilty of such and such a thing." It will at least be more manly, and why should not I add more Christian? (if truth be a Christian virtue,) to say, "In this case I am not an impartial judge; there has been a sore between us, which is not yet healed."

You will, I hope, forgive me, if I have appeared to be too long in thus qualifying my argument. For it is my firm conviction that much moral harm has been done, and affectation (if not hypocrisy) engendered, by that inconsiderate language of the pulpit, which lays down the perfection<sup>1</sup> we ought all to aim at, as if it were a standard every one should profess to have already attained. Thus, while men make a show of having pushed the evil spirit out of doors, he comes back, with seven others, through the window.

<sup>1</sup> Great social evils also come of imposing by law things which it would be well if men from persuasion would do of free will, or of love.



But, to return: we still are not disciples of Christ, if we do not make a sincere and constant endeavour to look at the best side in the conduct of our opponents, to construe their motives fairly, to make allowance for their misunderstanding; and, in short, to say verily, Father, forgive them.

Nor in such a duty, brethren, have we only those aids of humility and of knowledge which may become common to us with our Lord. But here, our very weakness may be turned into strength; and the least of all human beings has (strange to say) an advantage in this struggle, which was wanting to our blessed Lord. We have an incitement to forgive which Christ had not; for while he acted only from divine love and knowledge, blended with a strange humility, we, brethren, read on the blotted pages of our own life, and are reminded audibly in the whispers of our own conscience, how much need has every child of man to forgive, even as he prays to be forgiven. Peter said unto him, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

If any man finds such a duty difficult, the difficulty only shows it to be the more absolutely necessary for him to strive. In proportion as he shrinks from the easy burthen of "Forgive ye one another your trespasses," he is in danger of falling within the circle of that commandment, the letter of which forbids murder, but the spirit condemns hatred.

To guard against such a danger, let no one despise

the helps which may be procured from all the thoughts of natural kindness. By rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep, we may cherish in ourselves such a sense of true humanity, as will ever shrink from giving unnecessary pain; and will often prompt us to an instinctively gracious and noble kind of forgiveness, better than the precepts of the schoolmaster and the scribe. Yet a deeper and a more steadfast power of overcoming evil with good, will be found in that humble resignation of ourselves to the will of God, which (together with his knowledge of all men's motives,) has already been described as the strength of our blessed Saviour. By striving to imitate him, and not merely boasting of his name, but taking into ourselves these dispositions, which made up the mind in Christ Jesus, we shall be enabled to go farther in a course of steadfast meekness and self-devotion, than if we considered ourselves free to follow every humour of our own. As we stand in imagination under the Cross, it is not the earthquake which should move us; it is not the darkness which should appear strange; it is far rather the awful self-resignation of that chief Sufferer, with the cause of his suffering, and the manner of his submission to it: the twelve legions of angels, which He could have called, would have been no such wonder as our Redeemer at once combining and standing between God and man, saying to the Most High, "Father, forgive them;" and to mankind, "Look unto me, and be saved;" yet, "whoso taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after me daily, cannot be my disciple."

Without inquiring to-day, whether it is not possible

to preach grace too exclusively of providence, so as to make the Gospel of the Son a thing too far separated from the godliness of the eternal Father, we may still safely remark, that what constitutes the religion of Christ good news to man, is this doctrine of the forgiveness of sins<sup>1</sup>. Hence even our most solemn remembrances of that terrible hour of our Master's suffering, have a cheerful, though also a sobering power. They inspire thoughts which have stayed the heart of many a sufferer; and which, if we are wise, will also nerve us for endurance. Hence also, in all the changes of life, we are taught to carry into our transactions with our fellow-men something of that spirit of forbearance, consideration, and forgiveness, which speaks in our Saviour's prayer.

Nor in vain, brethren, let us be reminded to join in that grand intercession for the spirits of all flesh, which the example of Christ suggests, and the Liturgy of our Church contains. As we pray God mercifully to regard that family of many tongues but of one heart, for which his blessed Son was content to be delivered into the hands of sinful men; so we commend to his compassion those many in the East and the West who have need that ignorance or contempt of his Word may be taken from them; but who yet, (we pray,) may be saved among the true Israelites, and made one fold under one Shepherd.

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” The Jew knows not how far greater a King than

<sup>1</sup> By the term “forgiveness of sins,” our Creeds express “Justification by faith.”

any whom his prophets expressed has arisen from his race. The Turk knows not how much better an All-righteous God, sympathising with man, is than an arbitrary and almighty will. The infidel knows not how in losing the embodiment of a fixed historical belief, that passionate and mystical love of God, which he prizes, is apt to evaporate, like water without a vessel. The heretic knows not how that great society, which has gone on growing from the days of Abraham to our own, has numbered among her children alike the civilizers and the priests of the earth; that chiefly within her fold have prayers, and prophecies, and praises worthy of record been breathed from the conscience of men, moved by the Holy Spirit; and, at least, there a history of most solemn import has been enacted, as well as an inheritance been handed down of the fear of the Lord.

Nor, again, let any one forget, that the Messiah saying to the Father, "Forgive, for they know not," thereby teaches us, both to make prayers and supplications for all estates of men, and to strive for their moral improvement. Pray we then for the rich, that they may know what an account they must give of their stewardship. Pray too for the poor, that they may know how many of their sufferings come from their own want of providence and management, such as education would teach. Pray for ancient or noble families, that they may know God has prolonged their education over more than one generation, that they may be better instructed to be examples in his inheritance. Pray for merchants and artizans, that with diligence in their callings they may not suffer their souls to be material-

ised, and forgetful of all holier aspirations. Pray for the old, that they may know how soon they must stand before their Judge, and make perfect their repentance, growing daily in their desire after heaven. Nor less, pray for the young, that they may know into what irrevocable beginnings of future evil their little reason and great passion are too apt to hurry them. Nor let us grudge a prayer for lunatics and idiots, that to whom God has not given understanding, he would still grant salvation at the last; and for all prisoners and mourners; for all emigrants, not knowing that perhaps they are destined to be shipwrecked on some distant shore; and for all families anywhere visited with the rod of God, let us pray a holy use of the affliction, and consolation or a deliverance, as our Father in Heaven seeth best; and lastly, for all souls of men departing this life daily, let us ask a sustaining faith in Him who can say, "This day shall ye be with me in paradise;" and a merciful acceptance within the shelter of the everlasting arms of God our Saviour.

Father, forgive all these; for they all, in some part of their conduct or their belief, know not what they do; but, oh Lord! Thou knowest. Thou knowest whereof we are made; and even because thou knowest all things, yet still lovest all men, for thou art the Redeemer of all, into thy merciful hands we evermore commend our spirits.

"Let us fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men."

## SERMON XIV.

*THE KINGDOM OF GOD A KINGDOM OF THE MIND.*

*Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* St Luke xvii. 21.

It ought not to be denied, that if we had lived in the time of our Saviour we should have been slow to receive as King one who professed his kingdom not to be of this world. We should have been very reluctant to admit the proposition, that Jesus was the Christ. Possibly indeed our reluctance might have been greater in proportion as our acquaintance with Scripture, either as scribes (writers of it), or as Pharisees<sup>1</sup> (expounders of it), had tended to render us critical. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" was the question actually asked. We also know that the Jews diligently "searched the Scriptures," for our Lord tells them so (in a mood which every candid scholar admits to be indicative), though probably they did it in a spirit different from that of the ingenuous Bereans. When, however, the Jews read in the book

<sup>1</sup> I here adopt what seems morally the most probable, and etymologically an admissible, derivation of Pharisee, from a word meaning to expound. Hence the phrase, "*dividing* the word of truth."

of Deuteronomy of a prophet being raised up like unto Moses, they interpreted the passage of that long succession of prophets, Samuel, Elijah, Daniel, who from time to time should arise, reviving in men's hearts the sound of the word of the Lord. When they read in the second Psalm of "God's anointed" being established, they understood it only of a king, reigning (like David or Solomon) upon the visible rock of Zion. When again in Isaiah they read the text "Israel is my firstborn," they applied all the prophecies respecting the Son and servant of Jehovah, either (as the Jew in Justin Martyr says) to the personified people of Israel; or (as later Jews say) to the consecrated priesthood, who had charge of the Bible and the temple at Jerusalem. So, once more, in the seventh chapter of Isaiah, by the Virgin who should conceive, they understood some one in the reign of Ahaz; by the child born<sup>1</sup>, perhaps *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, and by the two kings, Rezin of Syria and Pekin of Samaria.

In short, there was a deeply-rooted, and perhaps a very natural, reluctance on part of learned Jews, to conceive of the anointed king and deliverer of Israel as a person suffering and bowed to earth by affliction. "That the Christ must needs suffer," or that the prophetic king was to be a king "crowned with thorns," is one of the main points which the apostles have great difficulty in reconciling to the apprehensions of their hearers. Possibly, indeed, there may have been a moral inability on the part, of the Jewish people generally to

<sup>1</sup> So R. Lipmann, in his *Carmen Memoriale*; R. Isaac; and the author of the *Nizzachon Vetus*, published by Wagenseil, in 1681.

conceive the idea of a might, stronger than any might of man, yet destined to prevail only through suffering, or to think a kingdom the “desire of all nations<sup>1</sup>,” which had no kingly attribute, save that it came in the spirit and the power of Him, to whom the angels cry, Holy, Holy, Holy.

It does not however appear that the above inability was connected with any neglect of the sacred volume which Timothy, for example (though a Jew) had known<sup>2</sup> from a child; nor that it would have been remedied by a more critical knowledge of the Hebrew text. Rather indeed, if any one wishes to speak candidly as regards the Jews, accurately as regards the sacred text, and still faithfully in respect of the religion of Christ, he must allow that two conditions were required in order to enable a Gamaliel or a Hillel to anticipate the interpretations of a St Paul or a St John. The first of those two conditions depended upon no less a power than the wonder-working providence of Almighty God; the second called for no meaner teacher than the manifestation of his grace.

In the first place, there must have come a change over the history of the world, not necessarily resembling in its outward details the changes anticipated by the prophets, but embodying the same eternal *principles* which the providence of God had revealed to them, as wrapt up in the working of the events of their own

<sup>1</sup> It must be fully admitted that this text of Haggai is only an accommodation to the Messiah.

<sup>2</sup> Whether he knew it in pure Hebrew, or in some ancient version, might depend partly on the local language, whether Greek, or Syriac, &c.



time, and as destined therefore, in virtue of their divine origin, ultimately to prevail. Perhaps Elijah the prophet may not come again; Israel may have no second Exodus through the Red Sea out of Egypt; the law of Moses may not go forth out of Jerusalem; the altar may not smoke with the sacrifices of rams; and the child may not with impunity lay his finger on the hole of the asp, or play by the cockatrice's den. *But something* must happen, analogous, or corresponding, in a way, to the train of sentiment embodied in all those expressions; *some great events*, in relation to which the language of the prophets may be only a parable, such as the promised land was of heaven, must with their own invisible finger unroll the scroll, and interpret for us the spirit of the prophecy, even at the risk of re-writing the letter. These events must convince us that, in short-sighted man, as in an earthen vessel, there dwelt the heavenly treasure of an unquenchable anticipation of God's doing hereafter on a larger scale, what he had already done in Zion; and they must present in themselves not necessarily mere parallels, but exemplifications of the same divine dealings which had already moved the spirit of the prophets to speak in the language, and lavish the imagery of things temporal, yet feeling more than they could express of things eternal.

Thus in fact, my brethren, the great and emphatically true prophet will be Almighty God. Events, traced on the world's history, as it were, by his finger, and MEN and NATIONS and PRIESTHOODS placed upon the world's stage by his arrangement of the drama, will have been

themselves the fore-shadows of a picture which was to be painted more vividly, the fore-speakers of truths which should afterwards be spoken more distinctly; and so (it may almost be said) fore-seers, through the strength of the religious affections, of realities already imaged in the analogies of their own hope, and the transactions of their own time. In short, much that is called prophecy will more strictly resolve itself into *type*; and not the study of texts will prepare us to expect events, so much as events themselves teach us, that *one Divine Governor* is repeating on a grander scale the same eternal principles, of which He had already scattered no obscure indications in the history of the days of old.

But secondly, there was required, as already has been said, an expansion of the conscience, and such a pouring out of the clearness of spiritual vision, as might well be called "opening the eyes of the understanding." There must be put aside much natural prejudice, with all such local and personal predilections as acted upon the mind, *like a veil* between its gaze and the true likeness of God; and the removal of such a veil is called, in the language of the New Testament, *revelation*. For example, it must be seen clearly, that whether God be worshipped in Jerusalem or Samaria, is of little consequence, compared to whether He be worshipped in spirit and in truth: for him to call Israel his firstborn is a thing of little value compared to his becoming the Father of all mankind; and all such distinctions, whether Jew or Scythian, bond or free, Englishman or Italian or negro, vanish into nothing, when compared to that sacred and precious character, which all men's souls have in

common, as being all partakers in some measure of the divine likeness, and as having their thoughts, their affections, and their struggles known long before to Him who has provided (in many mansions) for their everlasting welfare. Again; it was quite necessary that men should understand the only *enemy of God* to be *sin*. It follows indeed from what is already said, that neither Esau nor Canaan could be in themselves hateful to God, except so far as they broke away from the embrace of his paternal providence, and refusing his law, chose rather to range themselves on the side of Moral Evil and Darkness against the Lord of Life and Light.

But a somewhat deeper conception must be entertained of the love of God, which passeth knowledge; at the same time of that holiness to which moral evil alone stands irreconcilably opposed; so that, by degrees, the mind may expand to this great idea of the kingdom of God being properly a kingdom of love and holiness; and the only opposite kingdom being the reign of sin. Thus we find St Paul, when the passionate attachment of his youth to the language and the ritual of the Old Testament had been changed by the grace of God into a more heavenly jealousy for things not made with hands, uses this strong expression: *sin reigned*; or there was a *kingdom of sin* in the world, until the kingdom of God, manifesting its grace and truth by Jesus, who is therefore anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, came forth as a kingdom of godliness. But now, in order for any one to have this conception of the kingdom of God, as the reign of goodness, he must have had unveiled to him the face of the Most High; he must

have learnt that the Almighty is All-righteous; that God is good, and doeth good to all; that all the highest thoughts we can conceive of justice, mercy, and beneficence, are witnesses to us of the will of the All-holy, who is their author and their source; and that *creation*, in all its parts, does not more surely attest the ordering power of the Supreme Mind, than all our purer aspirations and moral judgments point to the divine amiableness of our Heavenly Father. Then, as any one compares such an idea of God with that which ruder ages had taught of an irresistible but jealous and capricious power, he may truly say, "God hath done great things for us;" he may justly infer that to produce this change in men's conceptions, some one must have come forth from the fulness of the divine love; or rather, that the divine love itself must have taken body and dwelt among us; and so he may enter into the spirit of St John's declaration, "No man hath seen the Father at any time: the only-begotten Son, who ever abides in that intimate relation, which may be expressed by the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him to us."

Suppose now a person, like St Paul, to have thus determined to know, not Jesus after the flesh, but Christ after the spirit; suppose him to conceive of the kingdom of God as the reign of goodness instead of a reign of sin, and at the same time to acknowledge its foundations cemented even by the blood of whatever costly offering might be required to convince man of the terrible nature of moral evil, and to represent in the sight of God the penitence of his people, being a something on which every man might, in true contrition, lay

his own iniquities, thereby associating himself alike in profound sympathy and in solemn sacrament with the great sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Suppose our convert farther to find that this prevailing sacrifice consisted of no less than the life of the High-priest offering it, and the same High-priest to be also the great revealer of God, by exhibiting in his own person an embodied likeness of that God who, as the Father, is invisible; suppose, that the divine person, thus incarnate, is in his life rejected; but that from his death goes forth a virtue such as never death had before; and that, as in his life He was preacher and priest, so after his death He becomes king in a kingdom which extends from sea to sea, and the sound of his messengers goes out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. What conception do you imagine our convert would then frame of the relation in which this new religion stood to that which went before? Would he not say, This certainly is not quite what the expressions of our old preachers of righteousness would have led me to expect—but it is something very far better. They certainly made the temporal Israel play a large part in their visions; I now see that the Israel which God is daily more vindicating for himself, is either mankind or the divine Redeemer of mankind; they thought Elias was to come—perhaps they felt truly that some fervent spirit must precede every great change in God's dealings with mankind, and such a spirit we had in our John the Baptist; they thought of Canaanites and Moabites being trampled down; but I now see the sin, the ignorance, and the hatred, and whatever dark powers may

suggest evil thoughts to the imagination of man, all trampled under the feet of a people, elect to means of grace, and going from strength to strength; they thought of great preachers or prophets raised up from time to time; I now see a perpetual teacher, abiding as the wisdom of God in the hearts of all faithful men; they imagined, that the Gentiles would learn our written laws; I already foresee, under the influence of our new kingdom, that far older and holier law, of which man has hitherto had but earthly transcripts, moulding more and more the consciences of successive generations into its own shape; and although eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the fulness of things heavenly, yet the humblest Christian knows more of the mind of the Spirit than even the great Baptist—and yet he knew more than the greatest of the prophets before him—so that verily God has come down to tabernacle among men; and his kingdom, not of sceptre and throne and chariot, but of righteousness, goodness, grace, and truth, is being established from sea to sea. Shall I not then hail the author of this blessed change, as the very anointed, or commissioned messenger of Jehovah, the builder up of the tabernacle of Judah, not indeed by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the living God? Is not this presence of an everlasting love better than any Shechinah in the tabernacle; are not the graces of a meek and holy character, which spring up wherever the showers of this new and living word have dropt, a greater glory to God, than the spoil which our priestly fathers would have seen wrested from the hills of the robbers? Is not, in short, Jesus of Nazareth, whether

born in great humility, or preaching on the mount, or taking children in his arms, or bowing to his Father's will in agony, or saying, "Father, forgive them" on the cross, a more truly anointed one from on high, than David called from the sheepfold, or he whom the queen of Sheba visited for his wisdom? Even now, is not His kingdom more emphatically that of heaven in its spirit, and yet more triumphant over earth in extent, more lasting in its perpetual duration of time? Surely, though old things have passed away, though all things have become new, yet this Jesus must be for ever the Christ, not only of Israel, but of all mankind. His words alone do not pass away. For He testifies, when He speaks of heaven, of that which He has seen; and He keeps alive, as the Lord and Lifegiver, that which his Father bids him plant on earth.

Perhaps, indeed, no man, save by the Holy Ghost, that is by some inspiration or unveiling of the true character of the Most High, could have said that this Jesus, so rejected of men, was nevertheless the anointed and the representative of God. But I am determined, St Paul might continue, to count no knowledge from any other quarter worth comparing with the blessed glimpses which my Saviour Jesus gives me of the holy and yet merciful character of God the Father; yes, even Jesus cradled in a manger, and Jesus crucified; little as some might look for glory or for instruction from that tree of shame, yet in that strange suffering, where patience is so ineffably mingled with awe; in the majesty and the humiliation; in the very contempt on the part of man, knowing as we do that this

contempt was undergone for our sake, by One who (if He pleased) could have called for twelve legions of angels; and in that sharpness of death which was to enable us to say, "Death, where is thy sting?" I recognise one more than conqueror, a revealer of God greater than Moses, a priest holier than Aaron.

Now, to revert to that old system of our Hebrew polity, it certainly was in many things unlike; yet, in how many did it not resemble and foreshadow this new kingdom! The constant sense of a present God; the sacredness alike of temple and land, of king and priest and people, from their relation to the judge of the whole earth; then the very ritual, with all its solemn expiations; and again the men themselves, with all their train of glowing hopes and vague anticipations; their firm belief that the Lord would never forsake his people; their hailing every human deliverer as one divinely sent; and the gradual growing up among them of the idea of some greater Saviour, in whom the glories of the priesthood of Jehovah should culminate; all these, and such things, shew the same God to have governed Israel, who will henceforward govern Christendom. The same principles have in all ages been at work under his guidance; the same spirit, or something congenial, has dwelt in the hearts of all his servants; every writing, in which their deep thoughts have been embodied, (imperfect as those thoughts may have been, compared to the more lively hope into which we are begotten,) was still divinely breathed; there was a divine spirit in the struggling of their minds; so that even the record of things old should still be reverently



cherished and may be useful<sup>1</sup> to us, to whom however the promise of God is, that He will write his laws on our hearts, and make our consciences (if indeed we are true children of God) the dwelling-places of his living Spirit.

Some such train of thought (it is humbly suggested) may be gathered in a general way from St Paul's Epistles, as forming in his judgment a groundwork for acknowledging Jesus to be the Christ. It does not seem necessary to twist details, by a Proerustean process, into a greater semblance of correspondence than they naturally wear. It may suffice to trace, in all the dealings of God with man, a deep under-current of analogy and harmony. Nor can we wonder that any such views should have exposed St Paul to the reproaches<sup>2</sup> of his countrymen, as one who spake against the revealed religion of their forefathers. The very freedom with which he handles the Old Testament; the mode in which he seizes an illustration of sentiment from passages of which the obvious sense is something different; and his bold announcement, that the bondage of the letter killeth, but the freedom of the Spirit maketh alive, must doubtless have differed much from the more literal interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. In fact, the Old Testament in the hands of St Paul, is like an instrument of music, transferred from its maker to some skilful player,

<sup>1</sup> ὡφελεῖ. St Paul. Compare Jeremiah's description of the New Covenant.

<sup>2</sup> Even in modern times, as I learn from Mosheim, St Paul has been gravely represented as "a free-thinker in disguise;" a charge perhaps quite as true as many others in which our "religious" newspapers rejoice.

whose touch makes it give forth notes of a loftier strain than any it had previously known. Just as in the case of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, our Lord quickens the text by enabling our minds to feel the life-giving power of God where he is truly known; so is it with texts about the Messiah.

Now, it may be remarked, such a method of treatment can only be quite justified when a person feels himself commissioned to teach a new doctrine, upon authority equal to that which established the old. Such authority, however, the apostles of Christ are here admitted to have possessed. Nor need I now nicely inquire how far it abides for ever, and from the nature of the case, with those who are "all taught of God."

But the point which this morning I wish particularly to impress upon my hearers is the nature of that kingdom which our Saviour Christ came to establish, and which the Apostles went preaching throughout the world. You see it is emphatically a kingdom of the mind. It cometh not with observation: it must be within us. Upon this point all the writers of the New Testament ring as it were the changes again and again. The milk with which they would nourish men is the unadulterate milk of the understanding. The worship they bid us offer is "the worship of the mind<sup>1</sup>;" the consecration, or sacrifice, of our mental being. The word of God which they preach is sometimes that creative word by which we are told in the Psalms that the Heavens were made; sometimes again it is the judicial word, or the

<sup>1</sup> This is the indubitable meaning of that text so often misquoted and argued upon even by eminent preachers. Romans xii. 1.

sentence of the last day, which we read in the Hebrews is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, bringing therefore every secret thing to light; but, oftenest by far, it is the great word or message of a new and living way; or of a communication open between God and man; a communication which we may close by sin, and drown the recollection of in all manner of folly; but which to-day—while it is called to-day—our Saviour Christ by his living presence keeps open, pleading before God the reward which was promised him of a kingdom of goodness, in which He should see of the travail of his soul by men saved from evil; and pleading also to us all that divine compassion which sent him, that excellence which ought for its own amiableness to attract us, and sometimes also that terror which must wait upon mercies rejected: “How long, oh ye fools, will ye love folly, and despise life?” or, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?”

But such a word, my brethren, such a message from the Almighty and All-holy God to his creatures is ever represented in the New Testament as a living and almost a creative thing. It is said to dwell in the heart richly. Its free utterance, either in prayer or in preaching, out of the fulness of the affections, is called the sword of the Spirit. For so in the Epistle to the Ephesians *ῥῆμα Θεοῦ* means an utterance of God<sup>1</sup>. But the word itself is declared to spring up and bear fruit. You see how it dwelt in the Apostles. It so pervaded their

<sup>1</sup> This interpretation is placed beyond doubt by its use in the ancient Greek Liturgies, as I have myself observed.

minds and lives, that the kingdom of God was within them. They became *subjects* to a principle of active goodness. It was *not sin* that reigned, but God who shewed himself thus reigning in them. For every good and perfect gift, every gracious quality, every keen perception, even of great moral truths, and not less of what are particularly called spiritual, is more or less directly from God. So the Apostles, having their affections spiritualised, or their minds hallowed, by a sense of what God had given, and what He required, carried about with them, St Paul says, "the dying of the Lord Jesus." That is, they walked through the world like men who had come fresh from their Lord's cross, and whose thoughts were bent on the meaning, whose lives would fain bear the stamp, of so great a mystery. Nor was this, as regards the Apostles of Christ, a mere garrulous or rhetorical sort of piety. On the contrary, you see the same principle in the sayings of the men, and in their doings. It is out of the fulness of their hearts that the inspiration of their writings speaks. Their epistles are inspired, because their lives were full of the Spirit of God. If any one will only study the writings of St Paul, for example, upon this idea of their being the writings of a living man, fresh from the feelings, and glowing with the experience, of one who knew himself an earthen vessel, but felt that he had a heavenly treasure; we may guarantee such a reader more insight into the Apostle's mind than could be gathered from many a verbose commentary. Not of course that any one wishes to exclude the reasonable helps of language and antiquities;

but no one will ever understand the writings of the Apostles who does not put himself somewhat in the position of the writers, or who refuses to see that the writings are the embodiments of thoughts, which have passed through the minds of living men.

With respect, however, to the kingdom of God, how many of us here are its true and loyal subjects? In one sense the Jews were children of the kingdom; and so in privilege and capacity are we all. Christ came to redeem us all. Very possibly there may be a kind of new Judaism among us, a kind of assertion, almost an affectation, of belonging to Christ, and of saying, "Lord, Lord," with a great zeal for what is distinctive in his revelation of God. But if the kingdom of God be a kingdom of goodness, it must be asked whether the Spirit of Christ has made us good. It is not the most pretentious repeaters of Evangelic language who have always most of the spirit of the Evangile. The kingdom of God must be within us. In that inner realm of motive and thought and aspiration, He who is holy must reign over evil thoughts; He who giveth sight to the blind must restore and quicken our moral intuitions, giving us a power of discriminating between right and wrong; He who giveth us largely all good things must check our repining spirit; He who is the source of all beauty in art or nature, and of all unspeakable perfection in things heavenly, must engage our strongest affections; He who is the Judge of the whole earth must guide the general tenour of that life and action, for which every man must in some shape render a true account, even as at the judgment-seat of God.

If then any of my hearers are in the habit of doing anything upon which they cannot look up to God and ask his blessing, then the *kingdom of goodness* is not yet established within them; they are still under that reign or rule of sin which is the irreconcilable opposite of the reign of God our Saviour. Pray we then earnestly to the great searcher of hearts, that He would come and reign over our hearts and lives, thereby setting up his kingdom within us. May we have such a conception of the character of our heavenly King as to say in a new and more earnest spirit than we have often hitherto done, "Oh thou who art our Father, and all-holy, whose kingdom is the rule of goodness, *may thy kingdom more thoroughly come*, both in my wayward heart and in all the kingdoms and generations of men!"

Lastly, it need not be thought that this true doctrine of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God leads either to oriental mysticism, or to laxity on the great point of Church unity.

Not extinguish constituents of nature, but hallow wholly by doing what God intended. Not to mutilate, but to reign over us.

Nor again, think mere waywardness or play of passion, the *rule* and the reign of the Spirit. In such an idea we should miss two important elements—humble-mindedness and love.

We do mean that reign of God, which by implanting a right conception and a hearty love of him, will sway our nature.

This, like the life in a tree, will put forth its leaves and fruit, after its kind. *Consider the vine and the fig-tree.* Does not the inner-life of every tree shape itself

into an outward manifestation of form and flower and fruit, according to the prescribed type of its kind?

Even so the Spirit of Christ grows into the body of the Church; puts forth creeds, liturgies, charities, virtues.

An union of all the ages, a communion of all the saints.

Though "ignorance at which God winked;" yet God reigning over the world, and transmuting by preserving it.

Therefore thank him for all the spirits of the departed.

Yet acknowledge imperfection and need to say, *Thy kingdom come*<sup>1</sup>.

*Preached at LAMPETER, about All Saints', 1852.*

<sup>1</sup> This sermon contains some things disputable, especially as regards the interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. For some of them may have carried a system of allegory and of accommodation as far as Philo, or used a style such as St Paul's about Hagar and the Law. Hence some may contend that all of them did so; nor could such an assertion be disproved without much difficult discussion as to the controverted age of various Targums. Walton's *Prolegomena* and Lightfoot may furnish specimens of such. I conceive, however, that the *Trypho* of Justin Martyr represents a class, and will, together with some hints in the Gospels, sufficiently bear out my representation. But if the reader does not admit this, (though Pearson probably would,) he may still observe, that, as regards the general drift of the sermon, the point is a subordinate one; and leaving that part as disputable, or even, if any one pleases, as dramatic, I feel a strong persuasion that the main outlines of interpretation proposed by me are correct. Nor, on the whole, after allowance for the above, is there any sermon in the volume which better expresses what may seem the peculiarities of my theology, or which I would sooner indicate as a key to the rest. The few closing sentences only consist of hints, which were more formally expanded in preaching.

## SERMON XV.

### *THE SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS.*

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*There are diversities of operations; but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. 1 Cor. xii. 6.*

It was a weak device of those counsellors, who told the king of Syria, that perhaps the Lord, whom Israel worshipped, might be a God of the hills, and not of the plain; that if he arrayed his army, therefore, in the plain, he might obtain better success. Well might the prophet predict in Israel, that if such were the foundation on which the enemy built his hope, it would crumble like sand. So it proved in the day of trial. But do not many of the people called Christians fall, some more and some less, into a similar error? We see it in its grosser form, among persons who set aside one day in seven, or one season in their year, or one or two years at the close of their lives, when they acknowledge themselves miserable sinners; but spend the rest of their time as if God were for a season dethroned; or, at least, as if they found no solid satisfaction in becoming day by day more conformed to his holy will.

Perhaps, also, a more subtle form of the same error may be traced in the separation, so frequently esta-



blished, between the religious element in a man and the rest of his being, either as regards practical religion, or doctrinal faith. It is at least not unusual to find persons, thoroughly aware that the service of Almighty God is a thing to be approached in a serious frame of mind, and even with earnest reverence. They are perfectly sincere in the respect which they pay to the Holy Scriptures, and Sundays, and other such aids or embodiments of piety. Yet all this occupies a distinct, and rather a small corner of their heart. The larger portion of that inner world is overrun with thoughts or desires which, whether directly contrary to true religion or not, are at least never brought into close contact with its tests, or, in short, subjected to its judgment; but are allowed to occupy an independent domain of their own. Thus, our Lord and Master is allowed to reign with absolute power in a certain limited province of his rightful dominions; but upon the tacit condition, that neither his word, nor that of his messengers, shall disturb the slumber or control the anarchy of the remainder.

Now, while such a division (of the inheritance) leads to many painful inconsistencies in the practice and the life of Christians; so, in points of doctrine, it almost necessarily generates a crowd of delusions, more or less pernicious. Thus men are led to push distinctions, which were convenient enough in idea or in classification, until they fancy the objects so described to be different in themselves, and even remote in their origin. For instance, in classifying the mere attributes of the mind, they make intellect one thing, and reason, either

the same or something rather larger; but the feelings they make entirely distinct; even conscience some persons treat as a separate portion of the mind. Once assume the reality of such a division, and, if you are asked, which of these portions shall we consider the sphere of things spiritual, or of that divine agent who quickens our sense of them, you most naturally answer, the feelings: or possibly you assign to the infusion of the grace of the Holy Spirit a distinct sphere of its own, but one more in the domain of the feelings than in any other.

Hence it appears to follow, that whatever can be said in praise of the exceeding precious gift of God's gracious help is also said in disparagement of other attributes of the mind, which are regarded as not so properly its province. Thus, for instance, many good persons take a pleasure in vilifying, either the intellect or knowledge. Thus also, a false antithesis is much in vogue, between faith and reason; whereas the true opposite of faith is not reason but *sense*: while again, with more propriety in this case, but still to an unjustifiable extent, both the physical world, and the mass of mankind, are considered as almost universally in opposition to God; whereas, in fact, the one bears ten thousand traces of the wisdom and the goodness of our Heavenly Father: and various members of the other are constantly employed by him as his instruments, his servants, almoners, and stewards,—why should I fear to say—his representatives?

Now, setting aside here the historical fact of old civilization having been trodden down by the savage

nations of the North, no one principle, or idea, contributed so largely to the corruptions of our still common Christianity in the dark ages, or is so likely to breed analogous evils now, as this notion which I have pointed out, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit being generally at variance with those of the Father and Creator, that is, the third person in the Trinity at variance with the first; God, in short, at variance with himself. For hence it became a sign of grace to quench the very light of that all-embracing wisdom, which is scarcely other than Christ, (for Christ was the reason, or wisdom, which came forth from God, and which lightens every man;) mere belief in peculiar doctrines acquired a disproportionate value, as compared to honesty and purity of intention; castes<sup>1</sup> of men, who had charge of such doctrines, acquired a corresponding influence; Christian faith lost its most genuine character, as a living witness in the heart against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, being represented alternately, as either the blind repetition of some formal text, or an eager excitement under some absorbing impulse. Such at least appear to be the natural results of dividing the house of man's mind against itself, or of forgetting what the Apostle teaches, that our whole body, and mind, and spirit, are to be sanctified; and every thought brought into obedience to Him whose service is true freedom. Indeed, it may generally be suspected, that where teachers of religion would dwarf the mind, for the sake of quickening the spirit, they are more or less

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, that the Christian clergy have ever been *strictly* a caste; for their office has never been hereditary.

conscientious, or at least apprehensive, of some weak point in their system which would not bear being tested by the light. But whatever plant our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. In venturing, then, brethren, to call your attention on this day to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I desire to do so under the guidance of this idea; that, as in the natural world there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh, so in the spiritual world there are diversities of gifts, but all these given in the undivided personality of man by one and the self-same spirit.

Cast back your thoughts, then, for a moment to that old chaos, when earth was yet without form and void, and say, what influence then brooded over the deep, either casting in a new mould the ruins of a former system, or breathing for the first time the seeds of animation. Surely, it was no other than the Spirit of God which then hovered over the waters; although, probably, the Hebrew writer did not intend us so to understand this operation of the Spirit as to exclude what we are elsewhere taught, that the unsearchable power of the Father made the worlds by the coeternal wisdom manifested in His Son; yet, wherever life is spoken of, the Scriptures appear to ascribe it in some measure to the agency of the Spirit. But, more simply, it is to God, whether acting as Father, or Son, or as Holy Spirit, that every power and instinct even of the animal creation is ascribed. When He letteth his breath go forth, they are made; from his hand they seek their food; at his voice they fill the forest with their young;

when He withdraws the influence which sustained them, they are turned again to their dust.

But, since their *soul* (I use the word here in its classical sense) is thus merely a vital one, and does not rise to the responsibility of mind—since they spring up and are cut down like the grass—their life seems only removed by one degree of refinement above that of mere vegetation; both, as it were, bubble forth wherever a channel is opened for the affluence of life, scattered everywhere by the Creator's hand; and both, when the purpose of their existence ends simultaneously with its means, are absorbed again into the elements, from whence new forms of beauty or enjoyment are to spring.

There is nothing which should startle us in the assertion, that we too partake of this lower life. We are formed out of the same dust as the flower and the worm. Especially, all our passions and our appetites (I do not say our human feelings) are the same in kind as those of mere animals. But the new element, which in man is superadded, may be most simply defined as the power of thinking. Whatever thinks, is mind; no matter of what substance it may be made. Nor has any one yet explained how mere soul, that is *life*, can become mind. We do, indeed, see how, under the influence of thinking and consciousness, many of our passions may be refined so as to become human feelings; we allow that fear may be trained into reverence; that hope, by having higher things proposed to it, may be turned aside from unworthy objects; and that mere appetite may be made the foundation of some virtues.

That the power of thinking works through all these, I both admit and contend; but whence this thinking power is generated, whence comes this consciousness, in virtue of which we say "I and We," are questions in no way so simply answered as by the supposition, that mind is a higher form of soul, but inbreathed by the same universal Spirit of God.

But He, who creates, does He not also sustain? So affirm both reason and Scripture. It is that Spirit of God, to whom all hearts are open, by whom we must conceive such attractions to be presented as will constitute motives to do whatever is characteristic of rational men. Through the power which He upholds, and the impulse which He suggests, men do not herd together merely as animals, owning no control save that of fear, or want, but they organise themselves into societies and recognise mutual rights, of which the sanctions seem to grow in strength the more purely moral they become. Opinion, for instance, becomes stronger than bodily compulsion; the sense of shame casts out fear; a feeling of justice resists filthy lucre; and love is often stronger than death. Here, then, is mind, properly so called, wielding for good ends the mere brute forces of the world, over which it is conscious of having inherited a rightful mastery: and although such motives as have been spoken of are developed by the contact of man with man; by education rather than by ignorance, and by society rather than solitude, he is indeed thrice blinded who does not allow such results to have been foreseen, and arranged, and fostered by Him who not only made the eye, and

planted the ear, but who knoweth our thoughts long before. Did God make the acorn, and did he not foresee the oak? Has he smitten the rock so that the waters flow; and shall we not ascribe to him the refreshment which flows on for the thirsty mouths of a thousand generations?

By the Spirit of God, then, I say, the ancient heroes founded kingdoms, and legislators devised laws, and the fair fabric of every science was reared, having had its twin foundations long ago laid, partly in the constitution of nature, and partly in the unfolding recesses of the human mind. Nor have the greatest men of all nations feared to acknowledge this source of their inspiration. Their very fables were born of this instinct. The Muse of the old poets, sacred as they deemed her, the Nymph who taught Numa his laws, the whispers in which father Jove counselled Scipio Africanus, as well as the dedication of his great rival, while yet a boy at the altar, and even the strange pride which Attila took in calling himself the Flail of God, are all more or less conscious witnesses to the same principle. Think not that all these things were, as bad men conclude, judging from themselves, gross impostures; but although the ill-trained aspirations settled down into religions so imperfect that we rightly call them false, still recognise in them some approximation to the truth,—something to be treated by us as tenderly as the unknowing worship of Athens was by St Paul. At least you will allow that the strong devotion of Columbus was not unconnected with the keen presentiment, which on scientific grounds he cherished, of a new world to be discovered;

you will scarcely exclude either Bacon, or Newton, or Milton from a similar verdict; how then can we refuse to say, that the greatest triumphs achieved by the human mind, in undertakings which required a complete balance of all its powers, are due in some sense to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God?

But if this has been the case with the giants, why not also with the masses? for God made not only the cedar of Lebanon, but every green herb, even to the hyssop which groweth upon the wall. If, on the whole, the lot of that uneasy multitude, which (notwithstanding all its faults) Christ pitied as he looked upon it, be on the whole improving as the world advances; if thousands now enjoy what was once scarcely open to tens; if the general spread of intelligence be accompanied with a correspondent increase of comforts; and if many nations now mingle the produce of their craft or their field, thus acknowledging the universal brotherhood of mankind, where once they would have met only to slay and to burn; is it wisdom, or is it a short-sighted want of faith, which is afraid of recognising in this linked march of the nations, a career not unguided of God's good Spirit; not unproductive (we humbly trust) of his will; and tending (as we heartily pray) to hasten forward his kingdom?

By the Holy Spirit, then, I say, we are *men*. But yet may He also mercifully grant that we become something more. Not that it is a little thing to become manly, or that there is any wisdom in contemptuous disparagement of our humanity. Yet it would be a greater achievement if we could also become god-like:



for when man returns to his dust, his thoughts, so far as they are earthly, perish with him; but those who have become truly, and in effect, sons of God, will find him not a God of the dead, but of the living.

Now, here it is the same Holy Spirit who gives us power thus to become partakers of the divine nature; even that imperishable nature over which our Lord has shewn that death has no power. In considering then the operation by which the Spirit works this end, perhaps it will be allowed me to invert the order in which his sevenfold gifts are usually enumerated, and to commence (for convenience's sake) with the spirit of fear.

It is the Holy Ghost, who, finding in our natures the sensation of fear, imprints upon this yielding soil due impressions of the power and majesty of our eternal God. He teaches us the madness of striving with one who is Almighty; of attempting to deceive one who is omniscient; of hoping to be overlooked by one who will bring every hidden thing to light. Thus the Holy Spirit turns a faculty of our nature to its proper end; and though his agency in this process cannot be an object of sensation, we infer its reality from the result. He persuades us to fear God, and promises us in return, that we shall fear nothing besides. Thus the righteous is bold as a lion.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit gives us *wisdom*. He at once finds and also upholds in our nature the power of forming general ideas. He directs this faculty, so that it acquires a strong perception of moral truths. It becomes conscious that the difference between right

and wrong is as eternal and immutable as are the thoughts of Him who is eternally the same; and that true happiness can only come from harmony of our will with that word which abideth for ever in the heavens. This perception of moral truths is *wisdom*. We have represented the fear of the Lord as the beginning of it.

Thirdly, the Holy Ghost gives us understanding. He, who knoweth the mind of the Creator, must needs know that we have the faculty of observation, of noticing what suits our own case, and of devising means to suit practical ends. Accordingly, he lays hold of this capacity and consecrates it. He teaches us thereby to make application, in our own case, of those general truths which it was the province of wisdom to discern. By spiritual understanding, then, is meant a spiritual feeling of our own personal duties; and not without reason, for every man's peace, are we taught to pray that the Holy Ghost would awaken in each of us this practical gift.

Fourthly, it is the same Spirit who teaches us counsel. In all human matters men learn from experience, and profit by reflexion. It is only because the children of light are not so wise in their generation, that they too often fail to profit by the experience of past error; they stumble to-day where they stumbled yesterday. Yet, surely, God gave us the power of considering our ways, of cross-examining our hearts, and of inquiring with all good men, and good books, and prayers, and meditations, how we might best avoid the old pitfall; or how most securely walk between

pleasure and moroseness, between presumption and despondency, on the way that leadeth to life. God, I say, gave us this faculty, and his Spirit also enables us to turn it to good account.

The immediate result, however, of thus taking counsel with the Spirit, is that which may be mentioned as his fifth gift. This gift is either the spirit of "ghostly strength," or at least an earnest endeavour to seek it. By taking counsel we have learnt our weakness; we now seek for strength. Hence all those earnest sighs, and supplications, which in earthly distress are directed to some human helper, are now lifted up to Him, from whom cometh the preparation of the heart. For the Spirit easily persuades us, that it is only by frequent lifting up our thoughts, and by conversing as it were (even out of the silent depths of our mind) with the Lord of light and holiness, there can be any chance of our drawing nearer to God, and restoring in our minds his likeness. By thus touching our conscience, and by thus informing us of both our strength and our weakness,—our strength when working with God, and our weakness when following lawless desires,—the Spirit becomes our Comforter and our fountain of ghostly strength.

But, now, since there is danger lest mere earnestness of prayer and aspiration be directed to some wrong object, or spend itself in mere passionate zeal, we have great need of right knowledge; and such knowledge is the sixth gift of the Holy Spirit. Probably He gave the first five to good men among all mankind; to such as Socrates, who believed himself daily kept back from sin by

a divinely-awakened conscience, as by "a divine sign;" and to such as Cicero, who taught that no man could be great without a certain divine inspiration. But this sixth gift of right knowledge is reserved for those, who have known the light of the only-begotten Son. In order to give it us what an array of means were not resorted to! yet all of them connected with our natural faculties. For this end the Spirit taught prophets to predict the Gospel and apostles to teach it, and various eyewitnesses to write Scriptures, and the church to receive them, and martyrs to die rather than surrender them for destruction. And although all Scriptures are read most profitably by those who partake most largely of the same Spirit which originally animated their writers; yet the mere Scriptures themselves supply tests by which we may try our own possession of the true Spirit; while, as a record of facts which accompanied the foundation of our religion, they give us more precise ideas of its nature; and, in short, furnish us with a body of knowledge into which, however, the Spirit must breathe life. Moreover, as at Pentecost the Holy Ghost first came with most manifest and unprecedented power, because the Son had just returned to the Father; so the same order is still observed. It is when the facts of our blessed Saviour's incarnation, his holiness, his mercy, his suffering, his triumph over the grave, have been most vividly presented to our minds, that the Holy Ghost has most power to convince us of sin, and of judgment, and of righteousness. For He then works, not upon ignorance, but upon knowledge: indeed, though his special province is not so much to reveal external

facts, yet He indirectly increases that knowledge; for by his gift of wisdom He confers upon every fact, otherwise known, its most pregnant significance; and by his gift of understanding enables us to view it in its most heavenly bearing. Why should we wonder then, that all well instructed Christians have ever believed the Holy Spirit to be more especially guaranteed or given in the two sacraments? For in these, as the intercessor on the part of man, He exhibits before highest heaven a lively image of the tremendous Sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of the world, and repeats by way of humble memento the pledge of the covenant, which God solemnly swore, in virtue of that sacrifice, should endure for ever: in these also, as the intercessor on behalf of a Father yearning to be reconciled with disobedient children, He exhibits before the eyes of our mind the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the Holy One smitten for our transgressions, the Well-beloved of the Father turning back upon us the life-giving mercy of God's averted countenance, by exclaiming himself in agony, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Even so, brethren, the Spirit comes with knowledge; and is, in the natural order of things, able to work more effectually upon such knowledge, than upon the mere aspiration of a conscientious but an ignorant heathen. We know the external facts, it may be said, partly by the ordinary providence of God, by the memory, the writing, and the handing down, which ordinarily preserve historical facts; it is the quickening and expanding influence of the Spirit (yet still the

Spirit acting through the medium of our natural powers and feelings), which awakens us to draw the legitimate inference, which teaches us that henceforward the very love of Christ should constrain us, that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to God, who both made us and also loved us, as He looked upon our lost estate.

Nor yet, brethren, let any one be startled by this view of the operations of the Holy Spirit, as if it explained too much away in making the channels of their efficiency the natural powers and feelings of the mind. For what better test could you wish of "a standing or a falling" soul, than whether each of its faculties do the work for which God intended it? If our fear be raised into pious reverence, our hope fixed chiefly on heaven, our affections the first steps of a ladder reaching to the sky, our animal souls become rational minds, and our minds spiritualized, the lower instrument obeying the higher, and the higher serving God, what more do we want to assure us of being taken out of Adam into Christ? We have then our divine Master's abiding test: we keep his commandments: we do the will of the Father. Only let no man think that so great a happiness is the gift of any less person than that Spirit of God, which, when considered in this Christian relation, we term with peculiar propriety, the Holy Ghost.

If still any one yearns for a more sensible presence, let me remind him, we walk by faith. Now what is seen is not strictly believed. It is not an object of faith. If you felt the Spirit, it would no longer be

spiritual. You would not then walk by faith. But herein consists the excellence and the power of faith, that as from creation it infers a God, so from the renovation of God's primeval handwriting on our minds it infers the Holy Ghost. The personal witness in either case consists in this inference by faith of an unseen agent from visible effects. The tree becomes fruitful; we know who must have watered the root, though it lay far below the surface of human consciousness.

Yet I will not quarrel with any one who chooses to call the joyful feeling of devout and hallowed affections a sort of sensible witness. Only faith ought to lie deeper than temperament.

Therefore, dearly beloved, if your hearts are touched by any pious or earnest emotion, as you think either of God's bounty, or his Son our Lord's sufferings to redeem us, fear not in humility to hope that so good a gift cometh from above. Pray, in calm and tranquil faith; that He who has put into your minds good desires, would mercifully bring the same to good effect. So, when those sound words fall upon your ears, which, surviving time, and darkness, and persecution, have come down to us from the apostolic age, "Lift up your hearts unto the Lord," fear not in all sincerity to answer, "We lift them up unto the Lord." For by his strength we stand, and it is He who giveth us the blessing of peace. So, being steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and rooted in charity, may you receive that last of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is *godliness*. We are now called the children of God; blessed

are we if we receive this our inheritance of resembling our Father which is in heaven. Having this, what more need we pray for? This, brethren, which by the help of the Holy Spirit you may attain if you will, is the crowning gift; in virtue of this blessing the Christian will say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." For when our whole human nature has thus become godly, I most fully admit the divine will outlive the human. The faith, which had reason so long as its companion, will at last outrun it. They will walk in company throughout life; but when they come in sight of the sepulchre, reason will stand and hesitate, but faith will press on into the very chamber of the grave, and there exclaim, "He is not here, but risen." Perhaps reason may still question, "How can these things be?" But faith will reply exultant, "I know in whom I have believed; therefore I will not fear: though my heart and my flesh fail, Thou, O God, art my portion, and the lot of my inheritance for ever."

Therefore to Him, who both sustaineth our steps in life, and can alone uphold us when we pass through the many waters, be all glorious majesty, wisdom, teaching, and salvation ascribed, with thanksgiving, now and for ever.

LAMPETER, *June 7, 1851.*



## SERMON XVI.

### *GOD WORKING HITHERTO.*

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*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* St John v. 17.

THESE words were spoken by our blessed Lord, after He had both healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and had also ordered him to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day. The same sort of question might be raised here, as in another very similar passage, where we read, that the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath. For it may be asked, on what ground does our Saviour assert the right of working on the Sabbath-day? Many will answer, that He does so on account of the dignity of his own divine person. "A greater than David is here;" or, "the Son of Man is Lord." Others again will prefer answering, it is on account of the sacred character which attaches to all works of charity, rendering it proper for us to be zealously affected in such good things at all times. So that it is lawful to do good even on the Sabbath-day.

Again, a third party will not scruple to remark, that however true may be the above reasons, they admit of being associated with a third, namely, the entire abrogation of the Jewish Sabbath by the bringing in of a better covenant. For, when God wrote his new law in the heart or conscience of mankind, that which was old

was ready to vanish away. Just, then, as the temple at Jerusalem perishes, when the whole earth becomes God's dwelling-place; and just as the seed of Aaron and Levi lose their exclusive honours, when the whole congregation are consecrated into a capacity of becoming priests; so the Jewish Sabbath becomes obscured when the whole life of every Christian man is consecrated with a dedication of his being to God. The Jew might give one day in seven; we must hallow the whole seven to the Lord. There is only a Christian Sabbath in exactly the same modified sense as there is also a Christian priesthood<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, if the Son of Man is Lord, so also are his followers and his brethren lords of the Sabbath. For He is not only our Master, but our brother. Nor is He only our Mediator, but also our example. Whatsoever things are his are ours. Thus, even as He is Lord of the Sabbath, so the Sabbath is merely made for man. (This must not be understood for man as a beast, but for man as an immortal and spiritual being.) Hence,

<sup>1</sup> That the priestly or clerical office of Christians differs from that of Jews or Heathens, and that it has only an *instrumental* value, may be cordially admitted. But I confess myself unable to understand the history, or the etymology, of those who contend, that even *Hiereus* or *sacerdos* means properly a slayer of victims; or that *priest*, the short form of *presbyter*, cannot be used without meaning *Hiereus*; or that, if it did mean *Hiereus*, there would be any harm in it. Wherever there are sacred offices, there is properly a doer of sacred things. The New Testament tells no more against a priesthood than against a Sabbath, though it discourages Judaic hardness in both. Nor are men found practically better, either for having the pastoral office reduced to a mere mission of preaching, or for having its esteem secularized into that of a human ministry: but the latter liberty seems especially to become a cloak of ignorance and instability.

the great Apostle Paul is not afraid to say, "Let no man judge you in respect of a Sabbath-day."

All the above answers appear to have so much truth in them, that none can be entirely gainsaid. Yet probably no one of them would be complete without some consideration of the other two. To begin with the last, we cannot overlook the fact that our Saviour claimed the same freedom for his disciples which He practised for himself. It was the disciples (and not Jesus) who plucked the ears of corn. Thus in the chapter before us our Lord bids the impotent man, who had been healed, carry his bed. That was not necessary to his cure. It was not therefore merely the works of charity or necessity, but it was the general liberty of working whenever work might be spiritually wholesome, which our Saviour vindicated for all mankind.

Yet again, it must be noticed that the works which our Saviour freely chose to do on the Sabbath were works characteristic of his own gracious mind. They are, in fact, works of healing and of teaching and of shewing mercy, rather than choosing sacrifice. If any man then have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, he also will freely choose, on any day consecrated by pious custom, or by the Church in her conscientious inspiration, to do the work of visiting the sick, of teaching the ignorant and them that are of low estate, or of praying to our Father which seeth in secret, rather than enjoying the indulgences which come of sin, and which tend unto death. Let us never, in denying the Jewish Sabbath, learn to despise or desecrate any opportunity of serving God in freedom of spirit.

Then again, mounting back to our first answer, we cannot but acknowledge, in the speaker of the words of our text, one who has declared himself greater than David, and who says, in a very emphatical manner, "Because my Father worketh hitherto, therefore I also work." "Therefore," we read in our chapter, "the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

Shall we try and consider in what sense the Father of our Saviour, and our Father, worketh hitherto? We should conceive of God as having created the world, not like a carpenter makes a chair by nailing together timbers and hammering them; but rather like a sower who scatters with lavish hand the elements pregnant with life and joy. His breath is the breath of life; his looking upon things with the eyes of his mind is that which causes them to be; his thoughts are our events; his power, wisdom, and beneficence, are the omnipresent fountains from which wonder and order and beauty have their flow. As the light shines, and the fire warms, and the stream flows, so the Father and Author of life cannot fail to make alive. He is not weary of creating, or of upholding. His arm is not shortened. His compassions fail not, but are new every morning.

Some of us may remember how a great divine<sup>1</sup> protests against this tone of thought being pushed so far as to make the Deity create, from any internal necessity of impulse. For he piously argues that it would detract from the perfection of the Most High, if we did not suppose all his works to be guided by the

<sup>1</sup> Pearson.

free choice, or volition, of supreme wisdom. We reckon it even in man an imperfection, though an actually existing one, that his mere impulses should often urge him to greater ends than his understanding has forecast. We must not then ascribe to the Creator any less perfect guidance than that free choice which is of self-determining wisdom.

Yet the same divine is not afraid to say that the eternal Father must, by the necessity of his goodness, have an eternal Son. For the Deity, he conceives, cannot be envious or self-centered in jealous exclusiveness, but must put forth from eternity his very likeness, an "alter ego," and a partaker of his being, that so his goodness may be communicated abroad, and mankind may have a Mediator, and the world, through the Son, may have access to the Father, thereby learning the infinite God not only as a Creator, but as a Saviour.

We will not, then, liken God altogether to things of earth. We will not say that fountain, or light, or paternity, in flowing, or shining, or having children, give more than a faint likeness of that life wherewith the Father worketh hitherto, in making known his goodness to men. But some such necessity as there is for the humane to relieve suffering, for the bountiful to be liberal after his means, or for the pure-minded to shrink from sin, we may perhaps piously ascribe to the loving-kindness of Him who "openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness." Such a necessity does not take away from the freedom of the will, but only shews that the will is a good will. Just as we do not make a man imperfect by saying in his praise that

it would be impossible for him to do a base thing; so neither do we ascribe imperfection to God by believing that so long as his eternal throne stands fast, so long the streams of life and goodness must ever flow from the depth of his divine and creative will. May we then not venture to say, if you will receive it, for our text leads us in that direction, Almighty God has no Sabbath: for He is never weary, but He worketh hitherto? Or rather, if you please, He has one eternal Sabbath. For He is Good. To do good is with him to rest. That which we call rest, as the refreshment of weariness, can have no place in the things which belong to God. But to rest in doing good, in creating and upholding and restoring, is the glorious prerogative of Him who calls himself the Eternal. I am, He saith, that which I will be.

But we have spoken hitherto of that eternal life of power and beneficence which manifests itself in creation. Dare we go on, without being over-awed, to observe, that the moral attributes of God, his overruling judgment, and his righteousness as well as his mercy, must also have the same eternal activity? Or is it to any of us (surely to some it may well be) too overwhelming a thought, that to take account of all our actions, and to judge us hourly for the things we do pleasing in our own eyes, is no less certainly part of the life of Him whose name is Holy, the Judge of the whole earth. "He that formeth the eye, shall he not see? and he that planteth the ear, shall he not hear?" He that fashioneth the hearts of all nations, shall not He punish whatever thoughts are contrary to that inspiration of his law

which He hath written on their conscience? "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye have spoken in secret, shall be proclaimed on the housetops." For our Judge worketh up to the present hour. He is bringing to light, in our face, in our gestures, in our conduct, in the destiny of our whole lives, and in the sentence already prepared for us to hear before his throne, the sin we acted long ago, the perverseness of our childhood, and the iniquities of our riper years, the indulgence which we would not deny ourselves, and the passion which we would not curb. All these things are seeds which are for ever growing up into plants of doom. If any man, who has reached middle life, can assemble together the group of his youthful acquaintances, and think over the memory of those who have died, he will be stricken with solemn awe to find the actions of the youth of each reflected visibly on the features of one, the form of another, the fortunes or character of a third, and often on the shortened career of those who have dropt into the tomb. These things are so because the boy is the father of the man. Not less, brethren, let us add, the man is the child of an eternal inheritance. And again, these things are so on earth, because God is a living God, and He worketh hitherto. His hand unseen upholds the visible curtain of our lives. Even so, it may be argued, will these things ripen into everlasting fruit, because God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. That life, which partakes of his Spirit, He will ever uphold; that sin which has continued in obstinate rebellion against his law, his everliving righteousness cannot cease to punish.

Thus, because our God worketh for ever, the wicked go away into everlasting punishment as surely as the righteous into life eternal. If you know these things, happy are ye if ye think on them in time.

To any man of ordinary reflection, few things can be more sobering than the strong perception of this truth, that God necessarily works, even as He lives eternally. Just as a Cambridge mathematician said Milton's *Paradise Lost* appeared to him comparatively tame, but there were things in the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton which made his hair stand on end, so no flight of imagination can equal the terrible charm which belongs to the severe beauty of naked truth. "Our Father worketh hitherto," and whatever we do is in some sense only a part of his work. Not that, again, He uses us as a carpenter uses his tools; but rather as a gardener uses the living trees which he has planted; or, as some tree itself enables all the branches which partake of its life to put forth blossom and fruit in the strength of that stem whose offspring they are. But on such a point all metaphors fail, or only approximate, at best.

How far the living activity of God might also present itself to us as a ground of comfort, if we were left to our unassisted hopes of his fatherly mercy, is happily a question which we are spared the necessity of considering. For, by observing what sort of works his only-begotten Son (our Saviour) did on the Sabbath, and on every day, we learn to our consolation in what the work of the eternal God partly consists. When our Lord made his own likeness to the Father an



apology for saving life, He revealed to us the nature of the eternal Godhead. When He saw the impotent and the blind, to give strength and sight became the work which He did in concert with the Father; when He saw the poor, his life was to declare good news to them; when He saw the ignorant, his work was to teach them; When He saw the widow cast her mite into the treasury, his work was to praise her humble offering. When He heard the Pharisees in pride call the people accursed for not knowing the Scripture, his work was to warn them, that the pure instincts of holiness which the Spirit of God keeps alive in the simple, are better than all the disputations of the scribe. From such works of compassion, righteousness, and judgment, the Sabbath brought Jesus no rest. For in his personality dwelt an element of the Infinite<sup>1</sup>, which is not comprehended by space or time. He partook of that eternal being, which manifests itself to the world by flowing forth in grace and truth. In one thing only, as to his Divinity, subordinate to the Father, that He had received this being from Him who has it of himself; yet equal to the Father, in that it was given him to have in himself not any other being than that of the Father, but one and the same. Partaking of this one divine and illimitable life, the Word of God manifest in the flesh, must needs do the work which the Father doeth for ever. He must needs lift up the fallen, comfort the afflicted, and speak peace to them that were broken of heart. Yet with all these treasures of overflowing compassion, there still comes from the Son of God that word which shall

<sup>1</sup> Latin, *immensus*; more commonly translated *incomprehensible*.

judge mankind terribly at the last day. For God, who has appointed to all men death, did not clearly set forth the judgment after death until He had revealed, to try men, that redeeming love, without which judgment would be unbearable by any child of man, and, with all the aid of which, it remains a very awful necessity, that we must prepare to meet our God. It is like preparing metal, which must be purged from all dross, before it can come safely in contact with a consuming fire.

If now any one is inclined to ask seriously, who shall abide the day of God's appearing, the answer is clear. He who has in himself a life such as that which the Father gave the Son to have in himself. We cannot perhaps reverently say, the same, but we must say, *such* a life. For the religion of Christ is a living power. It is an unveiling to the soul of that which constitutes its strength. It is a participation in that spirit by which the Father worketh hitherto, and all who are partakers of his nature also work. This life we cannot have of ourselves. It is not born of passion. It is not congenial to flesh and blood. It is more affectionate than intellect. It is more humble than virtue; it is more divine than humanity. The name which we have nearest for it, namely love, is yet too much mingled with things of earth to express fully this power of godliness. It comes chiefly by looking to God, as unveiling himself in the manifestation of our Saviour. Hence the frame of mind, through which it is strengthened, may be called faith. It is not our own any more than the life of the vine is the life of a par-

tiacular branch. And as it comes not of ourselves, so the instinct of those who live by it is not to seek themselves. Being fed by the divine spirit, it partakes of that divine nature which ever works. Those who have most of it most deeply feel it to be a gift which they never merited. Yet the fact of its being a gift does not lead them to trifle with it as if it required no exertion, but rather to watch it more jealously, and strive for it more earnestly, lest that which was not originally their own be taken away, like some honoured guest departing from an unworthy house. We are apt to treat our own friends and kindred unceremoniously : but we observe some stranger with honour. Even so, let us guard reverently this dread visitor, the Holy Spirit, and take heed that our hearts be swept and garnished for his presence.

Truly, brethren, this one gift to our souls would be worth far more than all the world besides. It would do more for our enduring happiness here ; and it would launch us with the firmest hope on the dread voyage of the world unknown. Pray we then earnestly, that God would do for us in all other things that which He seeth best ; but that He would grant us this gift of abiding as lively branches in the vine of his Son. Very painful may be that chastisement by which He often purgeth the branches that they may bring forth more fruit. But wheresoever the true life abides ; the life of humility, of self-devotion, and of that love going out of ourselves to God and to man, which may also be called faith (working by love), there is also that deep satisfaction of which Christ spake, when He said, " Peace I leave with

you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you ;” there comes also the spirit of power, and the spirit of a sober mind. Hence that strange calmness with which the few who are great in the kingdom of heaven have turned aside from sinful pleasures, and gone through losses, sufferings, and reproaches, breathing perhaps a new spirit into their generation, changing the face of kingdoms, lighting candles not to be quenched, rooting up old abuses, transmitting inheritances of thought, or consolidating institutions destined to abide. Such men are indeed fellow-workers with God ; they are admitted into that fellowship of eternal life, which is a pouring out of the same spirit, or the communication of powers the same in kind (righteousness, forethought, benevolence) as those by which the world is made. Even such a fellowship becomes those who are also his offspring.

If any one asks why there are few who are thus thoroughly saved from the corruption which is in the world through selfishness ; or why most men seek the things that are their own, and comparatively few that peace which comes of entire self-devotion to God ; there seem to be chiefly two answers.

One is, men do not thoroughly believe that there is more happiness in partaking of the spirit of self-devotion which was in Christ, than in seeking pleasant things for themselves. Thus their faith fails them. They should pray for their faith to be increased. Lord, increase our faith in the blessedness of doing thy will, rather than in following the world, the flesh, or the devil.

But another reason is, men do not use the grace which they have ; and therefore more grace is not given

them. They have gross carnal conceptions of Scripture metaphors, and pray to have their souls saved hereafter, but do not strive to be saved from evil now. They do not see, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is heaven; and where the spirit of wickedness is, there is destruction and the beginning of hell.

Whereas if they loved and put in practice the Spirit of God, they would begin to do the work of God. They would find, every day of their lives, some little act of self-denial, or of kindness, or of truth-telling, or of honesty, which might be a witness and an exemplification of the life that was in them; then they would grow in spiritual life and energy. Like the muscles of the practised pedestrian differ from those of the lounging sot, so the energies of the soul in the humble and watchful Christian excel those of the indolent hooper for heaven, who cultivates no heavenly temper. When the powers of life are not used, they gradually die away. Prevent the living tree from growing, or persuade the bee not to gather honey, and then only will you find a Christian whose life is without the fruitful activity which belongs to the Spirit of God.

Take with you, therefore, to-day, brethren, this one saying. As our Father which is in heaven worketh hitherto, so we, if we are also his offspring, shall gladly and in spiritual freedom do the work of Him that sent us. It was a pretty saying of a Heathen that by not doing any good action he had lost a day. But the revelation which we have received of the mysterious sources of our strength, should far more strongly impress upon us the necessity of cherishing the gift we have all

received. Our spiritual life, the unwritten word of God within our souls, grows by his grace, and is as sure to bear fruit by it as the tender blade by the dew. It can no more flourish without partaking of his holy spirit than the lily of the field can put forth its glory without the kindly breath of the winds of heaven. But He worketh hitherto, and His children partake of His life.

Let every man therefore ask himself this question, By what work of self-devotion or righteousness, of forethought or goodness, am I this day cherishing and putting forth the divine life, even as my Father worketh hitherto, being good and doing good? Do I also work as having life in Him who is eternal life?

LAMPETER, *May* 29, 1853.

## SERMON XVII.

### *THE HOLY TRINITY AN INFERENCE FROM THE INCARNATION.*

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*No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, which is  
in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John i. 18.*

If any one takes the trouble to compare the Apostles' Creed and the one called Athanasian, he will find the same series of truths exhibited from two different points of view ; while again the Nicene Creed may be said to hold a middle place, in point of style, between the two already mentioned, but to resemble more nearly that of the Apostles.

In the simplicity of the more primitive document it is thought sufficient to set forth the great cardinal facts which lie at the foundation of Christianity, making up as a whole the Incarnation of the Son of God as our Lord and Saviour. Nor in the tone of the Nicene Creed is there any essential change ; the same facts being only unfolded with somewhat greater fulness, illustrated by some natural metaphors, and, in at most two instances, pushed to a doctrinal consequence. Whereas, on turning to the most modern of the three formal statements of belief which our Church has thought good to retain

in her services, we find those fundamental facts of Christianity not so much related as a knowledge of them assumed; but in place of them we find an emphatical protest against certain wrong inferences which had been drawn from the facts themselves, and a reasoned exposition of the doctrinal theory which is necessary to bind the facts, if our belief is to comprehend them all alike, into one harmonious whole. Both Creeds contain, one as much as the other, the doctrine of the Trinity; but the first implies that doctrine by means of facts which involve it; while the second draws it out by means of reasonings which expound it. Now it can scarcely be doubted that the first of the above modes of treating the same great doctrine is, for practical purposes in general, by far the most useful. The best method by far of teaching the right faith<sup>1</sup> in the Holy Trinity is to draw out from Scripture such statements of what our Saviour himself was, and what He did for our salvation, as may induce his grateful followers to acknowledge him heartily as their Lord and Master; together with such mementoes of our frail nature, and our only all-sufficient help, as may prevent us from angering the Holy Spirit, or leaning upon anything in preference to Him who is our strength ever in time of need.

At the same time it should be added, that it by no means follows the second mode is not also, in its kind, thoroughly correct. Hence, as on a former occasion, I have acted on the first, by dwelling chiefly on the practical side of our Lord's divinity and the Holy Spirit's

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jeremy Taylor's Sermon on Religious Knowledge, preached before the University of Dublin.



personal character, so I shall glance to-day at the symbolical doctrine, or the hypothesis by which alone the requirements of those two truths in conjunction are fully satisfied.

First, then, let it be noticed that every collection of facts requires some theory or other to bind it together. You cannot hear of summer and winter or ice and thaw, without some theory, however inadequate, of the changes of the seasons. Still more, if you take any historical narrative, you cannot believe that certain actions are truly ascribed to particular agents, without forming some kind of conception of the character of the persons by whom they are brought about. No man calls Nero humane, or Alexander Borgia pious, or Howard and Wilberforce cruel. You must either dispute the facts, or you must assign to the actors some kind of character. Of course it may happen that where the actions are of a very complicated kind, we may have to pronounce the character a curiously blended one, or to mingle praise with blame. Only in any case we are bound to take into account all the circumstances which the case presents.

The same principle, if slightly modified, will apply to whatever revelation we have received of the Highest Being. If, for example, we are told that the Almighty punishes the wicked, we must infer him to be just; if He created the world, we must attribute to him power; if He governs it, we must not deny his general providence; if He forgives the repentant sinner, and binds up the wounds of the broken-hearted, we cannot hesitate to say the quality of mercy belongs to God.

Now it is quite true a man may be no better for

drawing out such statements into the form of propositions. The simplicity of the facts of the Divine dealing is what it concerns him to know. Yet again, it is quite conceivable that a theory may be framed of such a nature as to neutralise the facts; depriving them, as it were, of their sting, either for good or evil; and so making them void, while formally acknowledging them to have occurred. We must beware then of such a theory as may vitiate in its results the facts we have to deal with, and deprive them of the lesson they may be intended to convey. You must not allow that certain persons have acted tyrannically and criminally, and then argue that tyranny and crime are things indifferent; or you must not call another man a patient martyr for the truth, and at the same time sneer away the moral force of his example. If you theorise at all, you are bound to theorise correctly.

We may now apply this train of reflexion to the writings of the New Testament. Any reader of the four Gospels will either have already inherited, or will form for himself, some kind of conception of the character, power, and office of the several persons, and especially of the great central figure mentioned in those memoirs, which are on every account so deserving of examination. I do not say that it is wise for a man in entering upon such a task to divest himself entirely of such aid as may be derived from those ancient formularies in which the great result professes to be already symbolised; but I only remark, that if he does throw aside such previous creeds, he will of necessity form, whether consciously or unconsciously, some analogous

conception for himself. If he admits the account of miracles, he will probably conceive them to be in some sense Divine credentials. If he finds those miracles to be works of merey and beneficence, he will draw some analogous conclusion as to the character of the religion which they attest; and if he finds certain declarations as to the nature or authority of the persons exhibiting these significant works, he must make up his mind to accept those declarations as a whole, or to reject them as a whole. Is it not then as clear as daylight that upon this question of the conception which such a man forms being the correct conception, or the reverse, depends no less than the result, whether he shall have the right key or the wrong one, the true sense of the records of our revelation, or the contrary; in short, the very religion of Christ, or something which may be exceedingly unlike it? For it is not the letter which saves, but the spirit; not the book which gives life, but that truth of which the book is but the embodiment. Nor am I here speaking of isolated facts, and little points of criticism, but of the grand conception which we form of the religion as a whole, of its Teacher and Author, in his own person and character.

But if such be the case, it must be very important not to overlook any of the essential facts of the history in harmony with which our theory is to be framed. Perhaps there may be at least two distinct sets of facts to be considered.

It is true, we find the Author of our religion born of woman, but we also find him conceived of the Holy Ghost—Son of David and Lord of David. It is true

He suffers hunger; but we also find his prevailing word forbids the fig-tree to bear fruit for ever. He suffers thirst by the well of Samaria; but He reveals to the woman the secrets of her heart. He has a little boat to wait for him; yet He can walk the tempestuous sea, and say, "Peace, be still." He goes about rejected of men; but the fruits of his going are healing the sick, cleansing the leper, making the lame to walk. By the grave of Lazarus He even weeps, but He also utters in no faltering accent the superhuman command, "I say unto thee, Come forth." But He is betrayed of his own follower; again, He knew long before who should betray him. He suffers in the garden exceeding agony; but even in that dark hour the angels recognise their Lord, and appear strengthening him. He suffers the death of shame between two thieves; but not that accursed tree or shameful company can rob him of his inalienable attribute, to forgive sin, and to promise rest in that unseen world where no human device avails. He is laid even in the grave; the stones are rolled, and the guard is set; but, just as if a man should wrap round a ball of fire with cotton, death itself dissolves, losing its power of detention when in contact with Him who is the Lord of life. After rising, his resurrection is doubted by one of his own disciples; but the doubt is soon succeeded by a fuller confession of "My Lord, and my God."

In short, for every step of humiliation or suffering, there is some corresponding mark of glory; as if the Almighty was pleased that neither the human element nor the divine should for a moment obscure each other,

even amidst the great humility of his only-begotten Son; until, at length, that which appeared the lowest fall into death and Hades, is swallowed up in the victory of exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Nor yet is the mysterious parallel of contrasts which we have been suggesting confined to the mere earthly career of our Saviour. He came into the world; yet by his agency the Supreme Father had made the world. He prays that He may be glorified; but it is with that same glory which He had enjoyed with the Father before all the worlds began. It is not the nature of angels that He takes<sup>1</sup> upon him, but the lower nature of man; yet all the angels of God worship him. He has indeed no form or comeliness; yet He had been in the form of God.

His Father is greater than He the Son is, yet He and the Father are one. He is the beginning and He is the end, (yet He has neither beginning nor end of days;) the  $\alpha$  and the  $\omega$ , first and the last; He is a Servant of servants, and He is King of kings; He is with God, therefore He is distinct; and He is God, therefore He is one with him.

These, brethren, are the sort of facts, or affirmations having for us the force of facts, all of which must be taken into account by any one who would frame a consistent theory of our Lord's Incarnation; or which he must at least expect to be satisfied by any existing theory, which, in consideration perhaps of its antiquity, or the authority with which the Church recommends it to him, he may be disposed rather to examine with

<sup>1</sup> Ep. Hebr. ii. 14. The word *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* more strictly means, *taking hold so as to protect*; but the context may sufficiently bear out my use of the quotation here.

somewhat of a friendly or at least a respectful prepossession in its favour. Can it then be a matter for wonder, if, where the premises run in such a mysterious parallel of Divine and human contrast, the conclusion also should be one transcending the range of our ordinary conception? I say "transcending," but do not say "contradicting." It is one thing for the Eternal Spirit not to be measured by the span of the understanding of dust and ashes; it would be quite a different thing for statements to be made, even of the Almighty, which were against the known laws either of our conscience or our reason. But that one God should be pleased to manifest himself to us in three forms of being, is no more a contradiction than for one kingdom (I use this as a metaphor only) to consist of three provinces. The unity of essential being comprehends the triplicity of person. Does not nature herself teach us, how an unity of principle may run through a thousand diverse manifestations of the same principle of life? Even so He, who is the Author of life, knowing his own Majesty to be unsearchable, has sent forth his second self, the very brightness of his glory and express image of his person, who is to the Father as an ever-flashing radiance to an ineffable light, veiled indeed in flesh, but declaring by his contact with humanity whatever it concerns us to know of God, whom, save by one or other manifestation of the Son, no man hath seen at any time. Set in order, if you please, all the texts of Holy Writ bearing upon this important subject; accept each of them as it stands in our Testament; explain none of them away; acknowledge subordination taught in one, and observe unity revealed in another; and you will find the con-

elusion already expressed for you, with singular beauty and precision, by that second of our Creeds, which the 318 bishops agreed upon in the Council of Nice. Might I not indeed have said, without quoting any text of doubtful genuineness or rendering, the conclusion is already drawn in the first chapter of St John, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God"? If now any one proceeds farther, and endeavours to frame what has been above said of the divinity of the Son, with all that he reads of the personality of the Comforter, into logical propositions, and especially if he shape those propositions with an eye to errors in the earlier ages of the Church, he will not be able to stop short of the general sum and substance of the Creed which we call Athanasian. (Illustrate by heresies—Sabellian, Arian, Nestorian, Eutychian.)

Here permit me to remind you that no man is really better or worse for framing his religion into formal propositions. It is not by doing so that he is saved. Only as it is clear, from the theorising tendency of the human intellect, that such propositions will in some shape be formed, it may become indirectly a matter of importance that they should be formed correctly. They must not be of such a kind as to neutralise, or make void, the facts of our faith. We are ready to admit that the doctrine of the Trinity, in the particular aspect in which it is laid down in the Creed called Athanasian is the technical or the logical side of the Christian scheme: it bears to a living faith the same sort of relation that a code of laws bears to the primary principles of justice: and, as for any plain person, who in

the simplicity of his heart may bungle over reasonings of this kind, we feel as much doubt of his perishing everlastingly, as we do that the weary infant falling to sleep in its mother's arms, will have its brains dashed out by her, because she is displeased with some unconscious murmur in its dreams. But, on the other hand, if we turn to the theologian who has been taught the bearing of all the ancient controversies alluded to in the formula we are considering, it is not easy to see how he can reject the general substance and body of the Creed, without, by necessary logical consequence, denying the Lord that bought him, and forsaking the faith which the Holy Church of Christ throughout all the world acknowledgeth. Possibly it may have been a touch of human infirmity<sup>1</sup> which made the compiler of the document, taken as it is chiefly from the works of St Augustine, attest his unshakeable confidence in the correctness of his own reasonings, by a somewhat sterner anathema than had been thought necessary to guard either the majestic fulness of the Nicene Creed, or the simple narrative in that of the Apostles. It is obvious, however, that we now only adopt those sentences of harsh sound in some such sense as this: "Here you have," the Church may be conceived as saying, "an indubitably correct statement of certain doctrinal propositions, which are logically involved in the fundamental facts of that religion of Jesus Christ, in virtue of which alone we are authorised to offer all mankind the free

<sup>1</sup> "It had not been amiss, if the judgment had been left to Christ:" so, or nearly so, says Jeremy Taylor, no less wise than eloquent, in his *Ductor Dubitantium*, upon Ecclesiastical Censures. The whole passage is well worth turning to.



gift of salvation. If you deny any of these statements, you will by implication be denying some one or other of the facts essential to the true faith of Christ. Take care, therefore, lest unawares you come under that sentence, 'He that believeth not shall be damned.' You perhaps intend only a little ingenious reasoning: but if you reason away the reality of the Incarnation of the Son of God, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain: we are yet in our sins. Once remove the foundation which is laid, of God manifest in the flesh, and you throw back mankind to the condition in which they were before Christ came. Beware then of preaching another Gospel, which is not a Gospel: for in Christ, though He is not the Father, but the Son, was yet manifest all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The assertion above ventured upon, that our doctrine of the Trinity is nothing more than is required to bind together the Scriptural facts of our redemption by Christ, has often been proved; but perhaps by no one better than by Jones of Nayland<sup>1</sup>. It will indeed be clear upon consideration, that there is no essential or practical portion of our faith which has not some point of junction, or contact, with this doctrine. Is the certainty of dying always before us? It is the Son who, by dying for us, has taken the sting of death away. Do we expect to be judged? It is the Father who has committed all judgment into the hands of the Son. Do we acknowledge a propitiatory sacrifice necessary to make reconciliation between the conscience of man and the dread purity of his Maker? Then must the

<sup>1</sup> The application, however, of some of his texts may be a matter for doubt, and his tone is not free from harshness.

victim be one, not himself participant of any human spot, but with a nature higher than any human nature; and we have already seen He took not on him the nature of angels. Or do we require a constant Mediator and Intercessor? Who shall go up for us into the holiest of holies, not made with hands, but He who came down from thence; or who shall reconcile the Creator and the creature, save He who hath taken of the divine compassion and the human sorrow, blending them with awful harmony into one?

Again, do our hearts require a constant vigilance, a guard against one stronger than ourselves, and a secret stay in every hour of temptation? Then will none suffice for such a task save He who knoweth whereof we are made; even He, who, pleading the cause of God with man, can convince us of all truth; divine in penetration, personal in his capacity of receiving prayer, of being grieved, of being angered; hallowing with his holy inspiration even babes and sucklings on whom He breathes; and consecrating with his presence even our frail bodies, until they testify, being transformed thereby into temples, that they are tenanted by no less person than the Holy Spirit of God.

Whether then it be life, or whether it be death; whether the judgment to come or the atonement whereby we hope to escape it; whether we rely upon a Mediator, who has all power in heaven and earth; or whether we dread offending Him against whom offence hath no forgiveness, or again trust the same One as our Strengtheners, our Sanctifiers, and our bringers back from the gates of death—we are in every case obliged to recur to some one of three persons; that is, some one of three (I do not say modes, but) forms of Divine Being, whom we can-

not help seeing are described in Scripture as distinct, yet of all of whom we say, *These three agents are one God.*

Not without reason therefore, brethren, our blessed Lord sent his apostles on their great mission to evangelize the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Nor was it from any indistinctness of view, as some suppose, that the fathers of the first four centuries made that sacred commission the corner-stone of their teaching. It is as a part of the Incarnation that the great father, St Athanasius, chooses to consider the atonement. They all saw clearly that this commission of our Saviour's to his disciples concentrated his entire Gospel; was, in short, *the Word*, or the great message conveyed in the new dispensation of God to mankind. Any idea of suffering this fundamental truth to be refined away upon condition of substituting for it mere allegiance to the letter of a book, from which the spirit was allowed to evaporate, would have appeared to them a mere halfway stepping-stone between Christianity and heathenism. Either, they felt, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared to us God, or else God is not more known to us now than He was to the Jews of old. Nay, even to the Jew, and to the Greek, St Athanasius himself did not hesitate to teach no other than the Eternal Son had from time to time communicated such glimpses of the unsearchable Father as either of them enjoyed. For if it had not been that God so talked spiritually with man, pitching as it were his tent by our Shiloh, no human gaze was keen enough to unravel the thickly woven mystery of clouds

and darkness which surround the eternal throne. Who can by searching find out God? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou understand? Is He, as we would wish, all mercy, all benevolence? then what mean the earthquake, the pestilence, and the plague? Or is He only capricious, blind, absolute Power? then what remains for us but to tremble? Has He even a personal control over the world, and a care for its inhabitants, or is the whole universe only a vast ocean effervescing with life, in which bubble upon bubble come up and sink back again into the fluctuating mass of existence? If so, what are we better than the worm and the plant? Who shall go up for us into the unknown, and bring back a certain hope, in answer to those questionings which have vexed the heart of the wisest of our race? When the mere religious instinct attempts to answer them, it either loses itself in dreams, or becomes bewildered into superstition. Or, if a mere priesthood undertakes the same task, a certain hollowness ensues, the result of a consciousness on part of the wisest how wide is the gulf between their attempt and success. There is, in fact, One only who can answer those doubts satisfactorily. His own arm must work our salvation. He, even God, must come out of the unsearchable and the infinite, which conceal from us the First Great Cause, or the Father, and must shew us some express image, not of any created being, even the highest, but of Himself. It is only when we have learnt, through history, through conscience, through a long train of providences, and through the Incarnation of the Son, how the Supreme

Power is pleased to work, not at random, nor by caprice, but by eternal Wisdom, that we begin to comprehend the relation in which we ourselves stand to the Eternal and the Divine. We could not ourselves have searched out that Wisdom; it must come forth out of the Divine Majesty, and thereby become to us the Word (St John). This is that self-revealing manifestation of God, which, spreading the impress of wisdom over creation, and clothing infinity as it were with an aspect akin to humanity, was ever inferred in some measure by the purest of Gentile teachers; which by the testimony of man's conscience and his highest reason also teaches him to worship in God, not mere might, but supreme right and wisdom; which communed in perceptible form with the patriarchs of the Old Testament; which spake to Moses at the bush; was hailed by David as his Lord though his Son; which consoled the Hebrew prophets in the long night of their nation's affliction by anticipations of they knew not what brighter kingdom to come; and finally, became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, being "born of the Virgin Mary."

It would not be reasonable to say, that even in the farthest moment of eternity this Wisdom of God ever began to be. We can of no time say that the unsearchable First Cause was without wisdom. Therefore is the Father eternally a father, and the Son is eternally a son<sup>1</sup>. Also the Father is eternally greater than the Son, yet the Father and the Son are One.

<sup>1</sup> Here was inserted, though unwritten, some protest against being thought to use *abstractions* or *ἀνομασίαι*, instead of *ὑποστάσεις*, with some

Upon the whole, then, it is in virtue of this revelation of the Supreme by the merciful, of the First by the coeternal, of the Father by the Son, that our God is no longer a God that hideth himself. He has come forth out of the unfathomable depth of a shadowy infinity; and we know by his manifested Word, full of grace and truth, whereunto we may liken Him, before whom the angels bowing their heads, cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Nor is it only an useless and a curious knowledge which (if we are wise by the spirit of Christ) we shall count ourselves to have attained. We now know what sort of worship to offer Him who is a spirit, and who will therefore be worshipped in spirit and truth. We know what judgment we are to expect from him; how thoroughly He searches every recess of our hearts; yet how mercifully He will take account of each human failing.

In short, we have an access to the Father, even to the unsearchable, through the revelation of the Son, who is the love of God manifested to mankind. We understand the Fountain of light through its radiance which shines upon us. We have also that constant help which the Divine Strengtheners, taking both of the power of the Father and of the wisdom of the Son,

references to a tract of St Athanasius (*π. ἐπανθρωπ.*) and the change in the use of terms, comparing the anathemas of Antioch and of Nicæa. Account was also taken of the technical characteristics of Arius and Sabellius, the catholic doctrine being described as lying between them, or rather as taking something from each. For the "person" of the Son is subordinate to the "person" of the Father, but the Divinity or very being of both is One or identical. Hence the *Λόγος* is called *Θεὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ, Φῶς ἐκ Φωτός*, and so he is second, *τάξει, ἀλλ' οὐ χρόνῳ*.

will ever minister to all them that call upon him in all time of affliction, of mind, body, or estate. Therefore we stand fast, knowing in whom we have believed. He is Almighty; He is all-wise; He is omnipresent to uphold, to teach, and to console. Therefore He is three, and yet He is one. We acknowledge the glory of this eternal triplicity of manifested form, while in the essential being of the Divine greatness we worship the Unity.

This is our word of God. This is the one great message to mankind. This is the Gospel dispensation. Into this faith we are baptized, and thereby made children of God. In the confidence inspired by this faith, we venture, dust and ashes, sinful and defiled as we are, to draw nigh to a throne which we have learnt is one of grace.... You may make it a theme of dispute. If you are wise, you will make it rather one of *edification*. Thus, as a writer who had just seen the generation of the apostles pass away, encourages us, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life<sup>1</sup>."

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

LAMPETER, *June 6, 1852.*

<sup>1</sup> This Sermon, like some others, was barely finished when it was preached. I had intended, by way of conclusion, to work in more of the tract of St Athanasius already mentioned, (which has also a special interest, as being closely modelled on the *Timæus* of Plato). On the whole, I think the best notion of this great writer's doctrine is got by considering his favourite simile of the Son being to the Father as *the radiance* (*ἀπαύγασμα*) is to the Sun.

## SERMON XVIII.<sup>1</sup>

### THE WITNESS OF GOD.

*There are three that bear witness, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* 1 John v. 8—10.

If we could imagine for a few moments that the faith of CHRIST had perished from the world, or even that

<sup>1</sup> Preached at Cambridge on Advent Sunday, Dec. 1854. I had not then read the *second* edition of Bunsen's *Hippolytus*, in the Preface to which the same use is made of the text. The argument of the Sermon may be compared with the first part of Butler's *Analogy*, and with some portions of Barclay's *Apology for the Quakers*,—an author, however, whose anti-eccelesiastical prejudices I need hardly disclaim. Soame Jenyns, and Mr T. Erskine, of Linlathen, have more expressly handled the same argument in books on the internal evidence or reasonableness of Christianity.

The passages enclosed in brackets were, for brevity's sake, omitted in preaching; but I have taken nothing away, nor to the original MS. added anything.

With what is said of the Fall of Man, the reader may compare not only St Clement of Alexandria (either in Bp Kaye or in Bunsen) and Origen, (in the fragmentary Homilies on Genesis, and in Huet's *Origeniana*,) but even the controversial writings of Jonathan Edwards, and the summary of his opinions by his son Dr Edwards. For the distinction between *natural* and *moral* necessity, and the concession of spontaneity, but *not* of *uncertain* contingency, to the Fall, approximates on one side to what I have said. Professor Hey's *Norrisian Lectures* are profoundly suggestive on this, as on other subjects.



its historical records had broken down to an extent far greater than most candid minds will probably pretend, it would be a very solemn question, in so great an emergency of human thought, what course we ought to pursue. [That something at least would be needed, not only to bind men together in the fair sanctities of life, but as a common way of access to that High and Holy One, whom we call Dweller in Eternity, I think much too evident to attempt proving at large. For the more daring speculators by whom alone all need of righteousness or piety is denied, have at almost all times been few; their lives in general have been too manifestly marked with either wickedness or unhappiness for them to attract followers; and in the very rare cases in which either the inadequacy of the symbols of the national faith, or the vices of its responsible teachers, have provoked an apparent severance of the cords which bind men and nations to the footstool of Heaven, there Almighty God has not failed to judge his own cause. The nations which refused to see light in his light, have felt thick darkness falling on the way of peace. That outward confusion, which statesmen have felt to be a disease beyond the reach of their remedies, was but the sign of an uneasy blank within; and it has been clear that when godliness was lost, humanity could not survive. We cannot do without a religion; and as the hunger of the body points to bread, so the necessities of the soul are a sort of index to truth<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Such is St Paul's argument for purity. The voice of conscience requiring it is of the Holy Spirit, and of God. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

But it is rather a different question, whether the religion of Christ has shown itself by experience so true, that we could not afford to lose any of its characteristic ideas, even supposing that, out of some terrible necessity, or out of wanton waywardness, we felt ourselves at liberty to attempt putting something in its place.] Nor would I say, brethren, that such a question ought lightly to be raised: but the temper of our times may have suggested it to many of us; and I propose, under God's blessing, rapidly yet seriously, to examine it. Of course, whatever in such a case we should not desire to alter, must also be best for us now.

It is no slight vantage-ground, at starting, that everything in our religion which concerns practical life, or its code of duty from man to man, is either acknowledged, or at least is proved by experience, to be of the highest excellence in its kind. For, not only the particular precepts of righteousness are such as rarely, if ever, mislead the simplest person who adopts them literally for his guidance; but they are so framed as to point, with no doubtful significance, to principles with which they are pregnant; and these principles are such as indefinitely expand; and such as if suffered through the affections to pervade the character, will at length mould it into the highest beauty possible to man.

[You will forgive me if I linger on what may seem so plain. But] even the objections, which have been raised in our own time, to the Gospel precepts of righteousness, are such as, if properly considered, may bring their Divine character out into a stronger light.

For example, it has been said that our righteousness is a one-sided one; that we lay excessive stress upon almsgiving, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and preparation for the world to come, while we pass over the weighty matters of courage, honour, and duty to our country and to our friend.

Now [there is a sufficient colouring of truth in this objection to make it worth answering.] It is very true that the exceeding tenderness, enjoined by our religion, for all who are helpless, and amongst them for the poor, is one of its most indelible characteristics; for it stands in close connexion with that fundamental mystery, that He whom God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, had first taken upon him the form of a servant; so that He was not more eminently Prophet, or Priest, or King, than He was also the Poor and Needy Man, not one of whose bones God suffereth to be broken.

But then, is it possible, that any one should either know the terrible inequalities which the social system of the old world engendered, when the master had power over the life of his slave, or should even consider the scarcely less glaring contrasts produced by the accumulation of wealth in our own day, when the crumbs of so many tables laden to excess would comfort so many a sufferer from want; and can he still expect us to be ashamed of this characteristic of the Gospel of Christ? If indeed such a man meant that the same charity which might only admit of one, and that the simplest, form of manifestation, amidst the Oriental hamlets of Galilee, may devise more beneficial methods,

and be wedded to a farther-seeing thoughtfulness, amidst the hives of British industry, we should then be entirely agreed. It is not necessary to defend those who feel a superstitious dread of passing the sturdy vagrant, while perhaps they treat harshly or neglect some needy dependent or relative at home; or while they suffer to wander in perplexity or sin, some one whom a little moral countenance, or a word of counsel in season, might have recalled into the way of life. But this we say, brethren, considering the vast divergence of classes in most countries known to us, and the perpetual proneness of human selfishness to forget the duties which thence arise, there is ever needed in the world an energetic witness in favour of the lean oxen against the insolence of the fat, by whom the pastures are trampled, and the waters spoiled; and if ever the voice of such witness has been stifled, some social judgment has been ever imminent; while again, where the Gospel has been suffered in this respect to carry its own message, its original records handled, and its letter used freely to spread abroad its spirit, there no instance can be found of mendicancy having been encouraged on such a scale as to become a national evil. There may be places, such as Rome, where these conditions are not fulfilled; but wherever they are, the spirit of intellectual freedom which Christianity keeps alive, has carried its own corrective to any undue sway of the balance; and the practical result has been, not only the almshouse, but the hospital, the school, and the colony; the softening indeed of afflictions which were inevitable, but also the lessening of crimes which come of ignorance and

circumstance; and so, not only the lifting up of the fallen, but the strengthening of those who stand.

[Is it not, indeed, very possible, that such persons as neglect the Gospel precepts in this matter, not only harden themselves thereby, but produce, by the withering of their better sympathies, a portion at least of that unhappiness which they hardly attempt to conceal, and which is one of the most striking characteristics of men by whom the hope of immortality has been laid aside?]

The test, after all, is practice. It is by their fruits that the Church of Christ is willing the doctrines of her Master should be tried. Glance then, first, at the qualities which his Gospel is supposed to overlook. If any men, anywhere, are seriously thought to have been more trustworthy as friends, or if any have shown more daring hardihood in danger, or more entire devotion of themselves as patriots, at the risk either of life, or ease, or reputation, than may be found in those nations which have ranged themselves most earnestly under the banner of Christ, let their names be brought forward and placed in the scale. We should not shrink from such a comparison; for then would come out the striking fact, that even in those virtues which are thought most alien to the shadow of the Cross, the generations which in hope of immortality sleep around our churches have at least equalled those mighty men of old who contended chiefly for a perishable crown. There have at least been no greater benefactors of the world which now is, than those who were the firmest believers in the world which is to come.

Again, as regards those virtues which the Gospel (we are told) enjoins to excess, patience, meekness, forgiveness, has any man ever repented of obeying these precepts to the letter? I do not speak of abstinence from revenge, or of concealing resentment where the only motive was a selfish cowardice; but did ever any man, because he remembered the words of our Saviour, and because he was willing to bear his portion of the Cross, tame down his pride to meekness, and forgive the tongue that wronged, or the hand that smote him; and did he afterwards suffer any unavailing regret, or any pang of shame? Very loud and clear is the tone in which all experience answers, *Never*. Perhaps no man, save one, has tried the experiment to the utmost; but in proportion as any one has ventured to follow this law of Christ, it has been found wonderful to disarm opposition, turning away wrath with gentleness, and even if it failed of outward triumph, still recompensing its subjects a thousand-fold by the peace which passeth understanding. Whereas, on the contrary, if any one believes this law of our Saviour to be a fanciful exaggeration, and therefore determines to shape his humour, or measure his retaliation, by some more natural standard, it may fairly be predicted this theory will lead him into the most fatal mistakes of his life.

For herein we see the wonderful difference between the law of duty laid down by Christ, and those which moralists have sanctioned among men. We draw out our map of the mind; we put prudence here, and passion there; with due space for intellect, and some for affection: only our skeleton has no life in it; we

even overdraw in theory what we make no allowance for in practice; and what we least of all know is the vital mainspring of the whole. But not so deals the Wisdom of God. For when He who "knoweth what is in man," and who "fashioneth our thoughts long before," would give a new law to his people, He spake no word to the parent about preserving the fruit of his body; that law He had already written in the Scripture of the heart; but He said to the child, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" there was to be the beginning of virtue amongst men; and so, when He would bring mankind into a new brotherhood, He spake not of the necessities of self-defence, and of loving friends, and of requiring good to them that treat us well; for all those things the Gentiles had truly taught; (nor is their teaching to be despised;) but, "I say unto you," are the words of Him who spake as never man spake, "love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you." Thus the kingdom of grace is in harmony with the kingdom of providence; the rules of the one make allowance for the texture of the material of which the other is composed; not an oscillation of the living machine, not a quivering vibration of the secret springs of the heart, but has been taken into due account; for the Only-begotten Son is not ignorant of the thought, or unmindful of the plan, of the Eternal Father.

But have all of us ever sufficiently considered what a paramount "evidence" of Christianity is contained in the fact that its rules of life exhibit the highest ideal of righteousness practicable for man? Is not the faith

which most elevates man likely to give the truest picture of God? For what faculty do our minds possess so rightfully supreme as conscience? Or what higher measure is there of truth than the purest instincts of our entire nature (I mean nature chastened by reflexion, and developed by experience)? It must be noticed that this argument is the more appropriate, because it is the one which our Blessed Saviour emphatically chose to lay stress upon himself. For even when fresh from wonderful deeds of controlling nature, and of restoring humanity, He did not appeal to technical miracle as a sign of power so much as to words full of wisdom, and to works which breathed the goodness of God. But this evidence, He tells us, is for them who work His Father's will. It is the pure in heart who most truly see him as He is. Would not this, indeed, strike us more strongly, if we ventured to regard our Saviour's precepts rather less as command, and rather more as advice<sup>1</sup>? If we laid less stress than we do upon the accompaniments of hope and fear, and accustomed ourselves to seek the strongest compulsion to believe in the very excellence of the words spoken by Christ, they would come out fresh in spiritual freedom, with an authority not less binding but more truly divine. For surely it is more worthy of God to say, "This is good," than to say, "This is your interest."

And yet, here we must also observe, how closely connected in all countries of the world has been *some*

<sup>1</sup> This idea may be partially suggested by Milton; but I have never seen it brought out with all the significance of which I think it capable.



hope of immortality, which Christ brought fully to light, with any approximation to that standard of righteousness which He also reveals to mankind. We might, perhaps, have expected men to practise all the duties of this life, though they knew nothing of the life to come. But so inextinguishable appears from experience to be that deep desire of the heart of man, which makes him thirst for the waters of eternal life, that, wherever despair of satisfying it comes upon him, there he sinks below the measure of his nature; drooping, as if the wings of his strength were shorn, and no longer gazing upon the sky, which once attracted him as his natural destiny.

[If this rule has any exceptions, they seem to be chiefly two. One is, when a belief in the immediate presence of the Eternal God brings men into such near contact with the upholder of their steps in life, that they are satisfied with his countenance as with the highest good, and have no anxiety to throw forward their thoughts into the future—and this seems to have been the case with the ancient Hebrews; while we can conceive another exception might arise, from such an intense idealism, as might, with a peculiar order of minds, bring their thoughts into a mystical harmony with God, and so produce a tranquil resignation of their future into his hands. But, however conceivably possible this latter tone of thought may be, the world has never seen it realized on a large scale. With men in general there seems an instinctive yet mysterious connexion between the standard of their moral aspiration, and the scale of their personal hope; the graces

of a heavenly character seem a training by presentiment for heaven; and perhaps those other rarer cases in which men think less of future happiness, because its eternal fountain Himself absorbs their thoughts, are not so much an exception to our rule, as a variety in its mode of acting. It will at least be no exaggeration to say, that whoever teaches men in general to look on the grave as the bourn of their hopes, and their final separation from their friends, will take from them something of their motives to innocence, and something of their means of peace; and that it is only in the strength of something like a Christian's hope that we can attain to anything like the Christian standard of righteousness.]

Here, however, some men will profess readiness to practise the duties of life as enjoined in the Gospel, and to share the hope of all spiritual men, in some kind of immortality. But it is the peculiar mysteries of Christianity they object to. What, for example, can we say to them, on (such a thing as) the doctrine of original sin? Now certainly, if it were necessary in our reply to become responsible for everything said from the days of St Augustine to our own, our cause would be more difficult than it really need be. But why should the Church not vindicate for herself in our time, the liberty<sup>1</sup> which the Alexandrine Fathers handed down, of interpreting the early chapters of Genesis as an allegory, an allegory, perhaps, of pro-

<sup>1</sup> The authority of Horsley, (whatever his *intellect* may render it worth,) might be quoted in favour of such liberty. But there are also reasons for it, of every possible kind.

cesses existing in the world, rather than as a narrative of events which happened literally once for all? May we not then understand that old Supralapsarian doctrine which has so harsh a sound, of the fall of man having been compulsorily designed, as most truly meaning that, when the human soul became cradled in flesh and blood, liable to ignorance and fettered by circumstance, it must often, in all probability, mistake evil for good; often come short of its nobler aspirations; often *fall*, in actual brutishness, from the likeness of God stamped upon it in idea: thus often it must have need of repentance and revulsion, and so cry out with St Paul, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" If such a reading of the Hebrew record by the experience of all time might be adopted, we should have several difficulties cleared up; we could understand how death may be in the world as a sort of attendant upon sin, or as a very fit correspondent to the shortcoming of the creature; yet the traces of its work may be legible in the records of the creation, from a date long anterior to the first instance written in books, of the ever-recurring fall of mankind. So far then is this disease from being introduced by Christianity, that her mission is to heal it; but its existence is proclaimed by the world with all its tongues. Almost everywhere with poets, those unconscious prophets of humanity, the common epithet for mankind is *weary*, or *sick*, or *pining*. In the first childhood of Greek minstrelsy we hear the supreme Deity lamenting that men ruin themselves by their own infatuation beyond his will; in the fulness

of Athenian wisdom, though from the most poetical of philosophers, we have the famous comparison of the soul to a chariot, which is diversely swayed by one horse of heavenly birth, and another tending downward to hell; and amidst the vast experience of the Roman empire, we find man described in strange antithesis, as inspired by God, yet as debasing himself to brute. Why then, after due allowance for the language of his school<sup>1</sup>, may not St Paul repeat in deeper tones of moral earnestness, that which we acknowledge as true when it comes from Homer, Plato, and Seneca, three authors indeed inferior to scarcely any of the ancient world? Or how could any religion, if Christianity were set aside, refuse to take cognizance of that which all nations cry out; and to which, even if they were silent, our own experience would still bear the strongest and the saddest witness of all? For surely very far<sup>2</sup> are we fallen from what we must infer to have been the idea which seemed beautiful in the Divine foresight, as that which should be born out of the great capacities of man; certainly no less far than we are also fallen from our own holier vows, from the approval of our better mind, and from the realization of the hope of our youth. Nor is this fall a less real one, because that

<sup>1</sup> Not only that of Tarsus, but that of Gamaliel and of Philo.

<sup>2</sup> "To convince Man of his fall...it is not necessary to appeal to the history which Moses has given of it; because Moses' history of the Fall is not the proof of it...the proof lies in the known nature of man..."—(The Translator, John Payne's, Preface to *Thos. à Kempis.*) Even Calvin, I think, has said something of the kind; but, at a distance from books, I am obliged to make some of my quotations from memory.

which comes of our race is so curiously intertwined with what comes of ourselves, that the knot is one we despair of disentangling. (*Now,*) it is no longer ourselves, for it seems to come of some companionship beyond our control, whether some mysterious involution of circumstance, or some hereditary taint; (*yet again*), it is ourselves, since who must not blame himself most of all for powers thrown away, and for opportunities granted in vain? Thus whatever is taken from the mystery, is only so much added to self-reproach. Perhaps, indeed, no slight portion of the undereurrent of interest which we feel in the sublime creations of Greek tragedy, may ultimately be traced to this thought; while very much of the pathos of our own deepest poetry is evidently derived from the same source. But, whatever account may be given of this moral disease of our race, (as for example, some may consider it as the effect of an aspiration or struggle to rise,) we are never cured of it, until we consent to take upon ourselves blame, and so introduce the remedy of repentance. So far, indeed, is our unbiassed conscience from assenting to those who assume the Divine forgiveness as a thing of facility, and almost of necessity, following upon any human sin, that it is exceedingly hard for any man of reflection to forgive himself. Who then shall say how far the graver sentences of our own judgment are already ratified by Him who knoweth our thoughts long before; whether the remorseful shiver of the nerves, that debateable ground between body and soul, be not the index of a true foreboding; and whether, what our hearts thus bind on earth, is not

also bound in heaven? If such questions ever cause any of my hearers uneasiness, I entreat them not to seek a cure for it in recklessness, and not in fearing to look the problem in the face. So fatal a remedy would be even worse than the terrible uneasiness from which it flies. And yet, to gaze fixedly on the Eternal, without hope warranted by experience, *or*, without borrowing assurance from passion (this latter being the substitute which men often devise for a true cleansing of the heart by confession and repentance.) might well paralyse the strongest mind.

If necessity ever compelled us to devise a religion, and if we meant by religion only the expression of the heart's feelings when seriously turned towards heaven, we still could not be deaf to the anxiety of those trying hours. We should, at least, require, either embodied in ritual, or expressed in speech, some acknowledgement of the reality of sin; and, if possible, some promise of its forgiveness. Should we, then, be warranted in attempting to satisfy this want, if we were not able to satisfy another which runs parallel to it all along, and yet is itself of even deeper and more enduring grain? It is not only the anxiety of alarm, but that of mystery, which we have to deal with; and not only the fear of wrath, but still more the earnest desire of the mind for knowledge of the Eternal, and its own wavering in many moods between opposite probabilities, which makes us cry out for some way of access in our conceptions, to that which *IS*, and *WAS*, and *IS TO COME*. Thus not only the heart yearns for propitiation, with a need to which mere theatrical assurance in ritual

could give only temporary relief; but the intellect requires a revelation to its thoughts, of that which is above it, and beyond it, yet which infinitely concerns it to know. If I only mention the words *matter* and *spirit*, I remind you of substances which metaphysicians in all ages have left face to face, after seeking in vain for any mode of bringing the two into conjunction, or giving either a full apprehension of the other. If we go a step farther, to the ideas of humanity and divinity, or of creature and Creator, our thoughts are still more vexed by the gulf which intervenes. But if we superadd the images of sinfulness and of purity, we have again things of which one is often impelled, though in reluctant waywardness, to seek the other, while yet the two are in their nature for ever irreconcilably opposed.

What need then here arises for mediation, in all the senses of the word! We require a medium even to frame and hold fast our intellectual conceptions. We want something, again, to bring together the high and low, even in respect of difference of degree; something, also, to lift us above perishable things, and to make our hope as immortal as our aspiration; but with this must be something to cleanse the heart of evil memories, and to make our performance equal our will; and these things, we seem to divine, can only be, if Almighty Power has chosen to own a mightier than itself in Love, or if the highest affections in man have something practically analogous, or may be taken as an index of what yet infinitely transcends them in God.

Thus, if we were obliged, in all soberness, to seek a practical solution for such problems, endeavouring both

to appease the conscience and to exalt its powers, (not therefore purchasing a moral sleep by any opiate of Circean mixture,) we should find ourselves trembling in desire upon the verge of that mystery which the faith of Christ embodies in the historical fact of the Son of God made man. We should earnestly wish (but I know not if we should dare to imagine) some picture to our mind's eye of the invisible<sup>1</sup> God, which should present to our thoughts an adequate likeness of the Divine; and we should aspire to animate our actions with some sample of man, (embodying in a life with which our hearts might sympathize,) the ideal of the human. We should cry out as it were, and long for the manifestation of some one blending the two. No one, I suppose, will understand me, as if our need were made an independent proof of the fact; yet the one would prophesy and seem to require the other as its complement; and at least it is a reason why the other, when we have it, should not be lightly esteemed. Truly did the great Italian thinker, from whom so many have borrowed their philosophy of history, say, that while all religions have done something, godlessness alone has created nothing. But it is no less true, that without some mode of bringing God and man very near to each other, we shall never found or perpetuate a religion for mankind.

We must, indeed, acknowledge, that to bring about such an union may require a blending of things difficult to combine; and the formal theory of its possibility may

<sup>1</sup> With the whole of this passage may be compared the Sermon on our being Sons of God, and that on the Holy Trinity, pp. 250, 2, 4.



transcend our conception, as it outsteps the range of our common experience. But there must be many persons in this Church who know that the most common acts of life require universal yet mysterious laws to underlie them. What, then, if the Incarnation (or the birth in the flesh of the Son of God) should, if we attempt to trace its theory, involve logically all the consequences which in the Creed called Athanasian are somewhat technically expressed, does it therefore involve greater difficulties than systems which (apart from the facts of Christianity) have been thought not only probable but necessarily true? Had not both the reasonings of Plato, and the perplexed allegories of Philo<sup>1</sup>, prepared us to expect a mediation of Wisdom, as alone capable of revealing to us the unsearchable will of Him who passeth understanding? Do we not learn, even from our own inferences, which come to birth so silently in the deep recesses of thought that they appear on the surface like intuitions, that as thinking in man goes before action, so spirit must be antecedent to matter, and that all the worlds must, at least in the idea of volition, (and probably also in time,) be the creation of the only-wise God? But by what name shall we call that going forth as it were of an offspring of the Everlasting? Could the mind, or the fate, or the word, of the Eternal and the Infinite, be a transient phase, or must it partake of that infinity which is undivided and for ever? It is not without a thrill of interest, approaching to awe, that I find the subtle intellect of the Hindús in an appendix (and probably an ancient one)

<sup>1</sup> See particularly the Tract *Quis Rer. Divin. Hæres.*

to the Vedic hymns, telling us of a period, "before life was, and before death, and before day and night, while the ineffable Deity dwelt alone;" yet even then he had companionship with "that which was sustained in Himself;" that wisdom, or desire, or voice, which afterwards came forth, giving body to his thoughts, and recognized by the wise, (through the intellect in their hearts.) as that which binds together whatever things consist<sup>1</sup>. Apart from Him was nothing then which since has been.

How wonderfully such language approaches to the Gospel of St John, or how far it falls short, I need scarcely here explain, but I quote it as showing (what indeed all the profounder philosophies show) how the human mind is ever driven, by a kind of necessity, to something which at least resembles the Christian Trinity sufficiently to justify it. The most probable reason for this convergence of opinion is, that the point where they converge is the truth.

Again, what if this idea of Wisdom and Love coming forth to reveal a Majesty which would otherwise have been unsearchable, can only be brought home to men's minds by a spirit of love, quickening their conceptions and binding their lawless thoughts into harmony, both with each other, and with the Highest Wisdom by which all worlds are preserved; have we not, as a conclusion from this fact, just such a doctrine as may discriminate between (and blend whatever is true in) the naked assertion of a Creator external to the world, and the sense of a Divine Being who is not only above all, but

<sup>1</sup> See Colebrooke's collected Works, Vol. I. pp. 32—34.

in all, and through all? Or, may not those difficulties, which embarrass the most thoughtful minds in any attempt to choose between the old Hebrew belief in a very Maker of the world, as if by handiwork, and the modern tendency to conceive of the Eternal as a source from which all things flow, and into whose ample expanse they are again gathered, find their true solution in that Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost, which at once affirms a great gulf between God and man, yet bridges it over by revealing the sources of our strength, and by giving to all believers in actual sonship, a sonship which, although by adoption, is yet in effect as eternal as that which belongs by inheritance to the Only-begotten of the Father? We seem here to have such a taking up and blending into one of what appeared opposite in two conflicting views, as is likely to be characteristic of truth. For all errors embraced by communities of men are partially true, and that which is fragmentary or distorted in each reappears in its integrity in the perfect truth.

If now any one remarks, that all this argument has left untouched the great question between the occurrence of historical facts, and the possibility of human imagination moulding its affections (by means of accumulating hearsay) into narrative, let him please to observe, that I leave the external history of Christianity exactly where I found it. Many others (and probably some who hear me) have laboured in that field.

The object of this sermon is to propound to you the idea, that, apart from all external evidences, there is a voice born of those deep desires and intellectual

requirements which make up our mental being—which, when such a picture as appears in Jesus Christ of the Eternal God and of His truth is presented to it—exclaims, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

Nor is it to be overlooked, that, in prosecuting this train of thought, we find those characteristic mysteries of the faith which have by some been thought its stumblingblocks, turn out to be the pillars of its strength. For it is through them that we make our religion unique, and in them that we find the means of reconciling opposite truths, and solving what appeared hopeless contradictions.

Only it ought to be allowed, in passing, that the stereotyped rigidity which these doctrines have now assumed in our formularies, is by no means so persuasive or so healing to the mind as those devout feelings and modes of conception, of which they may be considered as in some measure the moulded expression. Hence, if any one here should be embarrassed, either as regards their meaning or their consistency, I would humbly counsel him to go back in thought to those tentative and, as it were, instinctive processes, by which the Church<sup>1</sup> wrought out into a system the conditions or the consequences of her primary belief. He might notice, for example, how far more subtle and delicate was the metaphysical conception which the ancient fathers framed of the personality of each of the Divine

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jeremy Taylor, referred to above, in a note to Sermon xvii., and Bishop Kaye's account of St Athanasius, or Neander's *Church History*.

agents in our redemption, than the well-meaning dogmatism of some among the moderns appears able even to dream. Perhaps, also, it might be wholesome, or, at least, temporarily allowable, for such a one to conceive of the Christ, somewhat ideally, as the very Love, or the very Truth, or the very Wisdom of God, exhibiting itself in a human form; then, as he discovered, both by study of the Gospels and by prayerful endeavour to lead himself a true life, how thoroughly each of the above titles corresponded to, or was merited by, what is written of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, he might find the old story come out with a new meaning; he might recognise the fitness of having those grand but abstract ideas wedded to a human sympathy, and commended by the experience of human trials and intercourse; until at length, coming down from the mountain of speculation to the valley of faith and duty, he no longer separate, with Gnostic imaginings, that which God had joined, but pray in humility, not only, "Truth of God, be thou my guide," but also, "Son of David, have mercy upon me."

But to return: such a general argument as we have sketched, ought, if true, to make us embrace the external history with more open arms; for surely it requires very different evidence to prove a thing intrinsically in harmony with our highest reason, and one which is supposed to be improbable, either as being immoral or as self-contradictory.

But (I must add) are we not too much in the habit of treating Man as a mere animal, to whom religion is a thing so unnatural that it requires all the fences of

logic to prove it? and do not many even lessen the force of reverence and conscience, those witnesses of God in the soul, in order to magnify their particular mode of recommending an external creed? Would it not be better and far truer to consider Man as a child of God, fallen, yet retaining something of his kindred; as a being, therefore, to whom the worship of the mind is so unquenchable a desire, that the need of "evidences" is rather on the side of those who would thrust him down the precipice of godlessness and crime? The side of CHRIST is truly the *natural* side; for to his words our hearts responded in our childhood. [It is his scoffing detractors who ought to produce "evidences." If our religion is not good, let them produce a better. If our faith is false, let them only exhibit in their lives, and in a bible, and in a church, and in a liturgy, and in a lord or master, the faith which is truer. If they would only make such an attempt<sup>1</sup> in earnest, they would discover whether there is any other foundation they can lay save that which is laid. There is not even, in art or nature, a device or emblem they could choose as a banner, so profoundly significant as the Cross. If they took a sword, it would savour of war; if a book, or pen, it would be a lifeless pedantry; if a hand, or an eye, it would be but a mutilated limb; if a heart, out of it come evil passions: whereas in the Cross is the world-long symbol of all impulses, powers, and affections, being hallowed and strengthened by

<sup>1</sup> Such attempts as I have seen, though I would not speak of them otherwise than with compassion, go far to confirm this argument; as probably they suggested it.

being first patiently subdued and brought into obedience to God who gave them.

If this kind of argument sound strange<sup>1</sup> to any of my hearers, it is by no means a new one. It is far older than the technical one which would turn our faith into a proposition of Euclid. Thus even the stern and prosaic African, Tertullian, appealed to the *testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*—the witness of the soul born to be on the side of God. Still more strikingly the same father says, *Quod natum est de Virgine, nascitur in nobis*: “the Child of the Virgin is born in Christian hearts;” as if his mind had risen from the idea of Christ after the flesh to that of Christ after the Spirit, as the ever-springing Power and the ever-quickening Wisdom of God. It is quite in the same tone that St Augustine does not hesitate to claim whatever had been spoken truly among the Gentiles as part of that truth of God which had been incarnate in our Lord. [This, by the way, is one of the many advantages which a believer in our Lord’s Divinity has, in point of consistency, over an Unitarian, who still considers the religion of Christ as an unique revelation. By the one, Socrates may be acknowledged, like the Baptist, as a sort of forerunner of Christ, whereas, to the other, he seems only a rival.] Nor these only, but the ancient Apologists<sup>2</sup> in general assimilated their cause to whatever was best in the system of their

<sup>1</sup> It is indeed strange, that readers of Butler and Hooker should think the evidence of conscience practically a light one; or under-rate it in order to magnify sensuous phenomena.

<sup>2</sup> See, as a good example, the *Second Apology* of Justin Martyr: οὐκ ὅτι ἀλλότριά ἐστι τὰ διδάγματα τοῦ Πλατῶνος, κ.τ.λ.

opponents, and so endeavoured to find an answer in their consciences: whereas modern evidences have fallen into the mistaken track of repelling all correspondencies of feeling in the Gentile world, for the sake of magnifying the change of external allegiance.

What if Almighty God is mercifully bringing us back, by weariness of endless disputations about things external, to consider more the truth and the beauty of that wisdom which is holy, harmless, and undefiled? A man's religion, after all, seems not to consist so much in what he does from a demonstration that Christ can reward him, as in what he does out of love, for the very work's sake. It was by being brought within hearing of our Saviour's voice, and within sight of his healing gestures, and by watching his lowly entry into Jerusalem, that our young souls were magnetised, until we exclaimed with St Peter, "Thou art the Son of the living God." So that "witness of God," which St John speaks of in our text, is not the mere technical deposition of the Apostles or of their writings; that may be very useful; but yet that is the witness of man: it falls within the province of the understanding; which indeed is a faculty not without peril to be despised. St John certainly received it; but yet he thought the witness of God far better. This latter belongs to those devout affections, and to that harmony of the feelings and the conscience, which are the province of the Spirit. When the Apostle saw those sacraments of water and blood, which reminded him of the reality of His Master's Passion on the Cross, and when he saw that outpouring of peace of mind, with which the Spirit accompanied



these means of grace, he could not on the one hand dream, that Jesus had not truly come in the flesh, nor on the other hand doubt, that the Spirit of Christ was the Spirit of God. So we, brethren, by the sacrament of water acknowledge the reality of sin, and our need of a purifying fountain; by the sacrament of blood, we acknowledge both that Christ died for us, and that we ought so to die unto sin; and that our lives are not our own, but ever consecrated as an offering to Him, by whose Spirit they can alone be made perfect. If we rightly enter into the meaning of these two witnesses of the Gospel, and understanding them, use them, we shall find that the third witness, of the Spirit, agrees with them in one. By laying down our sins in thought, at the foot of that altar of the mind, which is ever reared in the Church not made with hands, we embody the Atonement in an act; and as we rise in the strength of the love of God, which is thus assured to us, we learn, how the sacrifice of Christ is once offered, and yet perpetually repeated; how the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and yet comes perpetually, so often as our thoughts rightly show us the Passion of our Lord; and how it ever fills that community of faithful men, which having thus the mind of Christ, becomes to him as it were a Body; and like the world in the realm of providence, so the Church in the kingdom of grace, becomes the habitation, and the fulfilment, of Him that filleth all in all.

Thus, even if some points in the witness of man either fail us, or at least are diversely interpreted; if that which seemed the witness of tongues should resolve

itself into a wonderful outburst of devout rapture ; and if prophesyings, however confidently once appealed to, should be chiefly accommodations, the propriety of which depends upon the ever-recurrent unity of the divine dealings with mankind ;—yet the love of God never faileth<sup>1</sup>, and this is the witness which saves the soul alive. Thus also, if the roll of successive Advents should, in a generation of all-questioning intellect, increase the number of those who ask, how much of what is said of our Lord's final coming is literal, and how much parable? we may no less hold fast by the truth, that all judgment is committed to the Son, who was Incarnate ; and as the words of Him who came to his Temple in great humility are found powerful to quicken and console, so the same words shall judge us when he comes again in power, and all the holy angels with him.

Lastly, brethren, if there be any truth in the above idea, that the true evidence of Christianity consists in its life-giving power, it becomes a question of more solemnity than it may ever have occurred to some of us to reflect, how far will our own generation, our Church, our university, our youth, our manhood, endure to be brought forward as witness in such a cause. If learning, science, ingenuity, might serve as witnesses, our cause would be in no danger. But it has pleased God, in that wisdom which none may gainsay, to stake the issue of his own great cause, and consequently the trial of our faith, upon our cherishing the mind and

<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Corinthians, c. xiii. vv. 8—13, and read Neander's "Planting of Christianity."

upon our living the life of Christ. To us, then, no less than to St Augustine, it is written, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." This know also, that whenever our Master comes, and whatever the fashion of his coming, whether in mankind's weariness of formality, or in their thirst for more living waters, or in the revolutionary storm of nations, or in the crash of elements at the last day, his first act must ever be to purge his temple. It is with the ancient men before the doors of the Lord's house, and with the sons of the prophets on the steps of its threshold, that judgment must ever begin.

"Watch you, therefore; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

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## SERMON XIX.<sup>1</sup>

*SERVANTS OF GOD SPEAKING AS MOVED BY THE  
HOLY GHOST.*

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*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Pet. i. 21.

So long as the religion of CHRIST is recommended only by the inherent weight of its ideas, it stands on nearly the same ground as the sentiments of justice or of right if considered prior to their being exemplified in history, or embodied in law.

Few minds, we may hope, are so brutishly depraved as not to acknowledge their neighbour's right to his own life, to the fruit of his labour, and to fair dealing in all social transactions, if only the conceptions of those things are brought calmly and deliberately within cognisance of their thought. But yet the naked idea of justice is not found powerful to restrain men's actions with anything like the dominion which it is capable of acquiring when its principles have been embodied in law, transgression of them forbidden by penalty, and instances of their operation in all the transactions of

<sup>1</sup> Preached before the University of Cambridge, on the Second Sunday in Advent, December, 1854.

life recorded and set forth in the history of a nation. So far, indeed, as the subjects of a realm are concerned, the authority which practically binds them is not that of the abstract sentiment of justice, but the positive law of the land.

A man is not permitted to argue that his conception of justice gives him a social claim; it is law which must ratify that claim, define its measure, and lay down the method of enforcing it. There is nothing in our own land so lofty, and not many things so minute, as not to fall within the range of positive and written law. But yet this law, which gives majesty to the sceptre, and edge to the sword, extending its ample shield over the lives of subject millions, and enforcing even for its own errors a sacredness which the wisest are the slowest to dispute, has behind it and underneath it a power greater than its own. For it is itself the creature of human thought; the ever-growing and often-varying embodiment of the conceptions of mankind; and although legislators, judges, and reformers, or even martyrs in the cause of freedom, may have spoken it of old, as they were moved by the providence and the Spirit of God, teaching them either through experience or through impulse, yet it is often marked by the imperfections of its time. The vessels in which the great treasure of the desire of justice was embodied, may have been vessels of earth; and if it is to retain its hold upon advancing generations, it must purify itself ever by contact with the living fountains of justice; must adapt its interpretation to new exigencies of social life; and must beware lest, by superstitious tenacity of the letter, any violence be done

to the spirit; even to that sense of righteousness in man, which is ever being trained upward, to realize the unwritten Word of God.

Now, we may very reasonably say, that to ourselves, as members of the Church of England, the great standard of theological doctrine must be that volume of Holy Scriptures which embodies the experience of the Church of old; the record of her revelations, and the tradition of her spiritual life; the transfusion, as it were, of her spirit into writing; which also the Church of our own land has stamped with authority, by adopting it as her written law. There are many obvious advantages in having so easy a court of appeal: an authority which teaches by example as well as by precept; a judge not biassed by our controversies of the day; and a record extending over a sufficiently ample range of time for questions of all kinds to have found in it a practical solution; for the blessings of innocence, and for the judgments which wait on crime, to have been each very signally exemplified; and for the often-contending (though they ought to be harmonious) claims of king, and priest, and people, of power and weakness, of wealth and poverty, to have each had a limit assigned to them;—a sentence, as it were, having been passed upon them by that experience of generations which expresses the verdict of the great Ruler of the world. Moreover, it must be noticed, that Scripture will have a greater sacredness than law, because it deals with a subject-matter still more sacred; and although the relations which the two bear to the thing written about may be the same, yet since the subjects are different, the writings will also differ.

Yet it ought ever to be acknowledged, that this Holy Scripture, which all members of our Church so justly regard with veneration, has also something behind it deeper<sup>1</sup> and far holier still; and if that spirit by which holy men spake of old, is for ever a living and a present power, its later lessons may well transcend its earlier; and there may reside in the Church a power of bringing out of her treasury things new as well as things old.

If it had been the will of Almighty God, we cannot doubt his power to have instructed mankind, by pouring before their gaze from the beginning all the treasures of his providence, and all the wonders of his grace. But it has pleased Him, who doeth all things well, to train up his Israel as a child, and to make the experience of bygone generations a landmark for those who were to come. There was a time when as yet the Bible was not, and we must not think that it was necessary to salvation. For the Spirit of God may have then striven with men; possibly even his Eternal Offspring, the not yet Incarnate Word, may have preached through the movements of conscience, and through words of warning, in the days of Noah. Certainly Enoch may have walked with God; Melchisedec may, in the sanctity of a Gentile priesthood, have blessed Abraham; the faith of the patriarch, in One who was his shield and his exceeding great reward, may have been counted to him as righteousness; and all these, and others whom no man can

<sup>1</sup> To deny this, is to deny Christ far more utterly than the Galatians did; and for any one to call such sayings an inversion of the groundwork of Christianity, only shows the urgent need there is for servants of God to preach them.

number, may have been gathered to the spirits of just men made perfect, if not before any records existed, at least centuries before the earliest of our sacred books took their present form.

But when the patriarchs have grown into twelve tribes, they are become a nation, and a nation must have a history; when they come out from the house of bondage, and conquer a new land, the Author of their deliverance, and the Giver of their conquest, must have his wondrous works recorded; when they have law, which is to be enforced by human rulers, though with reference to the Divine Ruler, it must be written in some express form; or, just as man, because he has the gift of reason, will utter speech with meaning; so the nation, because thoughts are stirring in its breast, must have a voice to speak forth the national mind; and, if the life which animates its thoughts be truly religious, the words which are their utterance must be sacred words; thus, where there is a Church there must be a Bible or a Liturgy; where there is a true Temple, there will be solemn Psalms; where decay, or formalism creeps over the servants of the sanctuary, if the Spirit of God has compassion on his people to awaken them, there will arise prophets, whose protest will be couched in accents pregnant with eternal truth; who will say to the dry bones, "Live," and to the prostrate Church, 'Stand upon thy feet.'

Thus, although man is gathered to his fathers, yet, as nations and churches represent, throughout fleeting generations, the everlasting providence and Spirit of God, so it is probable they will strive to prevent their



best thoughts from being swept into forgetfulness; and they will, by writing, give a permanent shape to their record of things temporal, and to their perception of things divine.

Then again, if the destined course of the world be really one of providential progress, if there has been such a thing as a childhood of humanity, and if God has been educating either a nation or a Church to understand their duty to Himself and to mankind; it must follow, that when the fulness of light is come, there will be childish things to put away. Not (indeed) that any part will have been useless in its day; perhaps a certain *unalterableness of spirit* may run through every link of the chain. Yet, if the chain is one of living men, each link must have a freedom of expansion, and there will be a power of modifying mere circumstance very different from the bare continuity of inanimate things. Hence, if the religious records represent faithfully the inner life of each generation, whether a people or a priesthood, they will all be, in St Paul's phrase, *divinely animated*, or, with a divine life running through them; and every writing, divinely animated, will be useful; yet they *may*, or rather, they *must* be cast in the mould of the generation in which they were written; their words, if they are true words, will express the customs of their country, the conceptions of their times, the feelings or aspirations of their writers; and the measure of knowledge or of faith to which every one, in his degree, had attained. And the limitation, thus asserted, of their range of knowledge, will be equally true whether we suppose the shortcoming to be, on an idea

of *special* Providence, from a particular dictation of sentiment in each case; or whether, on the more reasonable view of a *general* Providence, we consider such things permitted rather than directed; the natural result of a grand scheme, rather than a minute arrangement of thoughts and words for each individual man. It may be that the Lord writes the Bible, on the same principle as the Lord builds the city; or that He teaches the Psalmist to sing, in the same sense as He teaches his fingers to fight; thus that the composition of Scripture is attributed to the Almighty, just as sowing and threshing are said to be taught by Him<sup>1</sup>; for every part played by man comes from the divine Disposer of the scene.

By some such process, however, as has above been sketched, it has pleased the Giver of all wisdom to bring about for us through his providence the writing of these sacred books, which comprehend (1) the literature of the Hebrew people, (2) the oracles of Jehovah's priesthood, and (3) the experience of the apostles of Christ.

For such seems to be a division, under which we may naturally class those many voices of the Church of God, or those records of the spiritual convictions of the great society in which the fear of the Lord has been inherited from generation to generation, the aggregate of which books we call the Bible. Shall we venture to glance at each of these divisions in turn? We claim for the oldest of our sacred books an antiquity of perhaps fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. But the external evidence for their existence can hardly be said to extend over more than

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 23—29.

half that period. For all the earlier half we rely chiefly upon the contents of the books themselves. Nor can we even appreciate this kind of evidence without a certain freedom of investigation, which proceeds upon what Hooker assumes as the primary revelation of the human understanding. Yet, from this kind of evidence we are able, for a large part of the earlier books, to prove an origin of very high antiquity. Partly, the language agrees with what the date requires; as in the earlier books of the Pentateuch there are Egyptian words; partly, the manners agree, whether we glance at the ancient castes of Egypt, as attested by her monumental stones, or at the wandering tents of the patriarchal tribes; partly, again, the general scenery is true in character; and, still more decisively, the general tone of feeling, and the mental horizon, as it were, of the writers, is exactly what we should expect, as in due proportion to the age in which their lot was cast. Only, it must be added, that all these proofs of genuineness are also equally proofs of a positive limitation to the range of knowledge. We cannot, in one moment, say, these books were written in such an age because they have the knowledge of that age, and in the next moment argue that they have a divine omniscience, and therefore were *dictated*, or, as it were, dropt from heaven; for this would be, with the greatest inconsistency, to destroy our own argument and to introduce miracle, where we have been assuming the faithfulness of God's providence; as if we said, that the rain<sup>1</sup> and the sunshine are a contradiction to those laws

<sup>1</sup> Dr Powell of St John's.

of the Author of Nature which seem intended expressly to guide them.

Here, therefore, both for the above reasons, and for others to be mentioned hereafter, let me in all humility protest against that unwise exaggeration which makes the entire Bible a transcript of the Divine omniscience, or a Word of God for all time, without due reference to the circumstances and to the range of knowledge of those holy men who spake of old. The writers, after all, are *men*; and the condition of mankind is imperfection. They were *holy* men and servants of God; but yet all human holiness and all human service is only comparative, and a thing of degree. They *spake*; but speech is the organ of thought; therefore there is nothing in the Scripture but what was first in the mind of the scribe. *Nihil est in Scripto, quod non prius in Scriptore.* They *spake of old*; but all old times represent, as it were, the childhood of the human race, and therefore had childish things, which we must put away. The *Holy Ghost* was their teacher; but the province of this eternal Agent in our Redemption is not to give knowledge of earthly facts, which we know by the Providence of the Father, nor yet to give a new revelation of things heavenly which we know by the positive Incarnation of the Son; but the province of the *Holy Ghost* is rather to quicken our conceptions of things otherwise known; to hallow our impulses, restrain our wanderings, and guide our steps in those paths which the Father and the Son have already laid down for us to walk in.

But let no one therefore suppose that this limitation

of the knowledge of the sacred writers should lessen the sacredness, or destroy to us the usefulness, of that literature which, according to the measure of its time, the Church of God spake of old. We may receive the message of the servants as true without for a moment dreaming that the Great Master had communicated to them all the knowledge of his eternal plan. We may acknowledge the history a very wonderful one, because the events which it records were first wonderful. On the same principle as the very structure of the Hebrew sentence is a written echo of the chant of the temple; so that acknowledgement of the living God, which they whom the nations despise and Christians often misrepresent, have held fast amidst a thousand persecutions, runs throughout their history as a memorial of the mighty works of Jehovah in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea.

Without here venturing upon the very debateable ground of where miracle begins and where Providence ends, or without determining (what perhaps is by no means so important as many may suppose) how much we ought strictly to assign to each, we may safely say, the entire history, or literature, is one which seems destined to be the handmaid of true religion in the world. Just as the ancient Greek manifested the sensitiveness of his organization and the activity of his mind by a literature moulded in beauty and full of speculation; and as the Roman, whose mission it was to civilize the world with law, spoke the firm language of history and of manly virtue; so the Hebrew, having been wonderfully trained, laid the wisdom of the Egyp-

tians at the feet of Jehovah; he looked upon the earth and its fulness, and he said aloud, "It is the Lord's;" he saw kings reign, and he felt that One mightier than they had set fast their thrones; he heard of his fathers migrating, and marrying, and burying their dead in a strange land; and he felt that not one of these things was disregarded in the sight of Him who teacheth the wild-fowl their course through the heaven, and who upholdeth also our steps in life: or he bowed in the sanctuary on Mount Zion; and, as the question arose, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or stand in his holy place?"—the Spirit of God within him made answer, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; that hath not spoken the name of Jehovah over falsehood, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour."

Thus, in short, the spirit which runs through the literature of the Hebrews is eminently a religious spirit: in their history, and in their proverbs, and in the common stories of the people, though these may have been moulded somewhat in Oriental form, there is a true reference of all things to the will of a righteous Lord.

But, still more emphatically, the same character applies to the direct utterances of the great teachers of righteousness; to the oracular songs of the Temple, and to the kindling accents in which the prophets woke the conscience of their compatriots, as they denounced the fierce anger of a Judge long provoked by incurable sin. There priest and prophet go harmoniously hand in hand; so that the attempts of the assailants of church polity to sever their functions, are but vain. It is the province of the priest, not only to teach the difference

between the holy and the profane, but also that his lips should keep knowledge; and again, however earnestly the prophet may cry aloud for reformation of heart, he yet never ceases to maintain the sacredness of whatever has had spoken over it the holy name of the Most High.

Only we cannot judge either one or the other truly, unless we regard them in the closest connexion with the history of the people among whom they are written. For they are not so much a Word of God, externally dropping from Heaven, as a true confession to God, responding from the heart of man. Both the deep sighing of passionate devotion, and the fervent trust in a deliverer out of national bondage, would lose half their value, unless we believed that they came from men who prayed earnestly for themselves; who had tasted the rod of the oppressor; and who were concerned about the realities of their own mind and their own time. But why should not their devout sayings, and all the heroic deeds of trust, or love, or magnanimity, serve to the same end in religion, as the history of kingdoms in politics, and the strains of poetry in education, without our presuming to assign to the writers an infallibility which they never claim for themselves? We may read Moses, not for his physical geography, but for his Ten Commandments and his history. We may read the book of Joshua, not for its astronomy, but for a tremendous example of the law by which God sweeps corrupt nations from the earth; we may find in Kings and Chronicles, not imaginary and faultless men, but subjects of Divine providence, instances of Divine

teaching, and all that blending of interest with instruction, which the history of a devout people, told with reference to the Judge of the whole earth, is ever calculated to afford. We may also fully admit the unalterableness of Scripture, in the sense that deeds truly done cannot be undone; and fixed principles cannot be changed; nor would it be modest, to weigh the personal authority of even the most spiritual teacher now, against that of the Apostles who followed Christ; but yet we need not suppose that the arm of the Eternal is shortened, or that his Holy Spirit ever ceases to animate the devout heart. Above all, let no man blunt the edge of his conscience, by praising such things as the craft of Jacob, or the bloodstained treachery of Jael; nor let the natural metaphor, by which men call a sacred record "the Word of God," ever blind us to the fact, that no text has been found from Genesis to Revelations, in which this holy name is made a synonym for the entire volume of Scripture; but rather, the spirit is often, especially in the New Testament, put in opposition to the letter; and the living word, as for instance it was spoken by the Apostles, is constantly distinguished from the written tradition of the days of old. Most commonly in the New Testament, the phrase *Word of God* means the Gospel of Christ; or the glad tidings of the Messiah being come. It should also be noticed, that while the discoveries of modern travellers do so far confirm the books of the Old Testament, as to shew their historical character, they give no countenance to any exaggerated theory of omniscience, or dictation, but rather con-



travene any dream of the kind. When men quote discoveries as confirmations of the Bible, they should consider in what sense and how far it is confirmed by them.

And now, if we pass on to the experience of the Apostles of Christ, we shall find ample means for enabling us to fix its true value upon the record of Holy Scripture. However true it may be, that we know less of the individual writers<sup>1</sup>, and of the precise dates of the three earlier Gospels, than our fathers took rather for granted, yet it is certain that they express the belief and the preaching of the Church in the first century of the Christian era. Thus, instead of three men, we may rather appeal to the united testimony of the hundred and twenty persons who constituted the infant Church before the Day of Pentecost.

And, although some few books, such as the Epistle from which our text is taken, have their authorship reasonably called in question, yet modern criticism does, on grounds of internal evidence, agree very closely with that belief as to the genuineness of the Apostolic writings in general, which the Primitive Church adopted, from traditions of her own. (This, by the way, is an instance in which our modern freedom of investigation has added a fresh argument to our evidence.)

In these books, then, we find traces of a new spirit in the world. We have the thoughts of those who walked with Christ, and heard the gracious words which

<sup>1</sup> Compare the *Prolegomena* to Alford's *Greek Testament*, and Mr B. F. Westcott's admirable treatise on the *Harmony and Inspiration of the Gospels*.

He spake. We have the simple fervour of one Apostle; the despondent diffidence of another; the angelic loveliness and the love of a third; and, above all, we have the Judaic learning, the awakened mind, the passionate zeal, the practical energy, and the combining wisdom of St Paul. The epistles of this one writer will alone prove that whenever our Gospels may have been, perhaps, moulded out of the familiar converse of the Apostles into their present form, the belief in our Lord's resurrection from the grave was at least current long before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now, all these writers of the New Testament appear, partly as antagonists of the Old, and partly as witnesses who confirm it. Partly they are antagonists, for even the doctrines of Christ find fault with much that had been spoken of old. He appeals from the law of Moses about marriage to the purer instinct of the heart, as that which had been from the beginning; He refuses to confirm the law of retaliation; and both He and his Apostles, but especially St Paul, turn men's thoughts from the tradition of the wisdom of old time<sup>1</sup>, which was principally enshrined in the Bible, to that life of the soul which comes of the Holy Ghost, and to the ever-expanding law which is both written in the heart, and which accumulates enactment from experience. For St Paul's "tradition" contains his Hebrew descent, and his circumcision on the eighth day, with many other

<sup>1</sup> The great contrast between Christ's kingdom of the Spirit, and the Jewish kingdom of precept, strikes us less because we forget how often the Old Testament Scriptures are called the "law," or the "sayings of old time."

things which had been purely scriptural. They had all been written in the volume of the Book, and yet he repudiates them all.

Whereas on the other hand the Scribes and Pharisees call the followers of Jesus accursed, for not knowing the law; by which they mean the Scripture. They even pride themselves on searching the Scriptures, for they thought that therein they had eternal life. Yet our Lord does not hesitate to blame them, as searching the Scriptures in vain.

So again, St Paul calls the Galatians foolish, for desiring to be under the law, under which term he includes the book of Genesis. He is quite in accord with Jeremiah, who had prophesied under Christianity a time when the Word of God should be written, not in book or stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart, or in the conscience of reasonable beings. Yet, it is true, the same Apostle thinks, that the Divine Teacher of Mankind had never ceased to warn his Church of old; and that by the great principle of trust in an unseen but all-righteous Guide, He had led its members from the beginning; and hence all the utterances of that Church, or the traditions of the Old Testament, are divinely animated; they are written for our instruction; for who would not listen to the lessons of a great history of thought, or spurn the inheritance of his ghostly fathers? And thus their tendency is to make the servant of God wise, putting him, through the medium of an enlightened understanding, on the track as it were of Christian salvation.

Again, while the writings of the Apostles of Christ

represent chiefly the principle of the living spirit, they are themselves the utterance of the Church, or of that society which is the habitation of the ever-present Spirit of God; and, when duly preserved, they are capable of being themselves handed down as an inheritance or a tradition; yet, as being a tradition of a spiritual age, they may become witnesses, either for sober history against vague mysticism, or for the lively inspiration of the heart against the more lifeless tradition of a grosser and more formalised age.

What blessed lessons, then, may we not derive, if we are wise, from these holy books? What evidences do they not afford of our faith! They do not merely record, so much as absolutely *talk* of the inspired lives of the men who indited them. What warning do they not utter, as with a trumpet's sound, when we, forgetful of the Rock from whence we are hewn, become negligent in the work of the Lord! What comfort do they not breathe, in all our sorest distress; in our perplexity of mind, in our pain of body, and in our lowness of estate! By cherishing their words we assimilate our thoughts to the minds of apostles, and saints, and martyrs; casting, as it were, our earth-bound affections over again in a holier mould; and so drinking of the deep fountains which have their source in the well of life, beneath the throne of the Majesty of God our Saviour.

Let no man be ashamed, if the page on which such words are written is often wet with his tears; or, if their fashion, though in many things it be temporal, give shape and voice to his deepest thoughts of things eternal. Neither intellect, nor humanity, nor devotion, can any-

where be better purified and strengthened than in the homely page either of our familiar Prayer-book or of our Bible. There our sorrow and our guilty alarm will almost inevitably flee for comfort; and there, if we are wise, we shall learn in time to discipline our youth and to purify our joy.

But yet, brethren, let no inconsiderate exaggeration, and no polemical reaction from overstrained claims of the Church of Rome, induce us to mistake the spirit of the Gospel or of the Cross, for the letter of the Bible. A man may know his Bible by heart, and yet turn a deaf ear to the Word of God. He may lay stress on temporary accidents, such as *anointing with oil*; and may be blind to eternal principles, such as faith, hope, charity. He may even express the most malignant passion in scriptural phrase, as if truth were more true, or malice were less hateful because the vehicle in which it is conveyed may be of Aramaic form. Thus some have defended *slavery* because, they truly observe, that St Paul's epistles do defend it, and even condemn attempts to abolish it as the work of men "proud, knowing nothing<sup>1</sup>." Yet it is evident, that God had destined slavery to flee away in time before the principles with which the Gospel is pregnant. Thus our religion is one thing, and the books which record it are another. Some, again, have laid unreasonable stress upon the accidental opposition of Christianity to the governments and religions of the corrupt generation in which it was first founded; and hence many irrational arguments against kings and priests; yet, it is evident,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 2—4.

that the sacredness of the office of governor, and of teacher, and of rightful minister in the sanctuary, must last as long as this world endures. How many, again, with most unfair sophistry distort various texts of Scripture in order to force them unnaturally into a harmony which they suppose needful; whereas the very idea of a divine teaching, which lies at the bottom of the Bible, implies also the idea of progress, and makes it natural for the newer sentences to differ from the old. So, again, every new science has to run the gauntlet of opposition until, after forcing its way through bitter searchings of heart, it is at last pretended to be in harmony with those texts which were once (more truly, but yet quite irrelevantly) alleged to oppose it. Time would fail me to tell of Puritan perverseness, of fanaticism passing into tyranny, of science persecuted, reason insulted, morality depraved, and the Gospel of Christ congealed, mutilated, and elipt, as it were, of its wings, because men have assumed what the Bible does not assume, that inspiration means omniscience, or that the All-gracious Father, who taught men of old, has his unsleeping eye blinded or his arm shortened, so that He can teach us now no more. But, perhaps, no single study has suffered so much from this cause as the interpretation of the Bible itself. It may, however, be suggested, whether devotion also has not suffered somewhat. For, although the Psalms and other sacred writings are a treasury of expressions which harmonize admirably with the deepest breathings of our hearts; yet, when men compile prayers from these with servile imitation, like schoolboys take verses from the poets,

the spirit of devotion is apt to be exorcised; and this is one reason why modern prayers are so inferior to the ancient liturgies; for so long as the Church of old believed in the real presence of the Holy Ghost, she waxed mighty in prayer as she grew rich in experience; then the storehouse of her liturgies became heaped with things old, and yet her heart ever indited good matters that were new; and from those fountains the stream of prayer has flowed into all lands; until, at last, our bishops and pastors, as if they despaired of the promise of Christ, would take no weapon in hand that had not been hammered on the Jewish anvil; and so, many of our modern prayers have become a lifeless patchwork of texts; a<sup>1</sup> disquisition to the people, instead of a crying to God; and, as there is little affection in them which might even savour of the spirit, so there is often something which offends the understanding. We have fallen, in this respect, far below the level which the genius and the piety of Hooker had attained three centuries ago. That illustrious champion, both of the purity of the Gospel of Christ and of the freedom of the human mind, shows clearly in the second book of his immortal work, how Scripture may become “a

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jer. Taylor, Preface to *Golden Grove*. Would that those who in our own time have right manfully endeavoured to heal the disease of unreality in our devotional compilations, did not too often bring their own remedies from the dregs of the Middle Ages; and often, by assembling merely the dolorous portions out of Scripture, make work in feminine and sensitive natures for physicians of the body, (I speak from sad observation,) rather than do the work of the Physician of souls. But the true kingdom of God brings peace and joy in believing, with childlike confidence.

*misery,*” and “*a torment,*” and “*a snare;*” and his counsel is most truly judicious, that we should beware, lest by claiming for Holy Scripture more than we ought, we provoke men to deny it its due; lest, in fact, we pervert the Bible itself; and either destroy the spirituality of our faith, or give occasion to many perverse delusions; or, again, provoke till we almost justify a most dangerous reaction into scoffing infidelity.

But if such was Hooker’s counsel in his own time, how much greater need is there that some one, either in his spirit, or in that of the incomparable Jeremy Taylor, should speak words of even bolder counsel now! For it has pleased the Giver of our thoughts, and the Disposer of our lot, to enlarge on all sides the boundaries of human knowledge. There is no science of the heavens above, or of the earth beneath, or of the waters under the earth, which has not revealed mysteries of its own; or which does not refuse to be limited by the brief range of the Hebrews, who in all such things were learners rather than teachers. Again, our more extended familiarity with other literatures daily shows us that aspirations, congenial to those of the Hebrews, had been taught elsewhere by the God of the spirits of all flesh. But, above all, the critical interpretation of the sacred volume itself is a study for which our generation is, by various acquirements, eminently qualified. Hence we have learnt that neither the citations usually made in our theological systems, nor even those adduced from the Old Testament in the New, are any certain guide to the sense of the original text. The entire question of prophecy requires to be opened



again from its very foundation. Hence, to the student, who is compelled to dwell on such things, comes often the distress of glaring contradictions; and with some the intellect is clouded, while the faith of others has waxed cold. If the secret religious history of the last twenty years could be written (even setting aside every instance of apostasy through waywardness of mind, or through sensuality of life), there would remain a page over which angels might weep. So long, indeed, as such difficulties are thought absolutely to militate against Christianity, the strong necessity, which the best men feel for Christian sentiment, will induce them to keep the whole subject in abeyance. Yet surely the time must come when God will mercifully bring our spirit into harmony with our understanding. Perhaps a greatness and a place, not far from the Apostles in the kingdom of heaven, may be reserved for some one, who, in true holiness and humility of heart, shall be privileged to accomplish this work. We can almost sympathize with that romantic, though erroneous faith, which has made some men attempt to roll back the stream of human knowledge, and to take refuge from doubts in a dream of living infallibility. But all such attempts must fail; for the God of truth will make them fail. He who dwells in light eternal does not promote his kingdom by darkness; and He, whose name is Faithful and True, is not served by falsehood. If knowledge has wounded us, the same spear must heal our wound.

Nor can I close without humbly asking the grave, the reverend, and the learned, whether all this subject

does not call for greater seriousness, tenderness, and frankness. Who would not be serious on observing how many men's hope of Heaven is bound up with belief in the infallibility of a book, which every day convinces us, expresses, as regards things of earth, the thoughts of fallible men? Or who would not pity rather than blame, when the very inquiries, in which the love of God and zeal for his honour first engaged us, seem to introduce (according to popular theories) the most distressing contradictions? Or who is so blind as to think the cause of eternal truth should be defended by sophistries, of which a special pleader would be ashamed? One would make large allowance for the conscientious anxiety of those eminent persons, whose position makes them responsible as bulwarks of the Faith; and who are ever dreading the consequences to which the first outlet of the waters of freedom may tend. But may God in his mercy teach them, that nothing can be so dangerous as to build on a false foundation. The question, *how far we would go*, will best be answered by experience. Only it never will be safe to stop short of the Truth.

But, in fact, almost everything doubtful, or, at least, everything transparently erroneous in our sacred books, might be surrendered to-morrow with little or rather no detriment to the essentials of the Christian faith. It is strangely unreasonable for men to argue that they cannot believe God ought to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, unless they are also convinced that Cyrenius was president of Syria, or that the Cretans were always liars. Nor ought any one to doubt whether God

made sea and land, because it may fairly be questioned how far the poetry in Joshua about the sun standing still (or the allegory in Jonah about the whale) ought to be interpreted literally.

Almost all difficulties which are fairly raised belong to those things of earth, about which well-meaning Martha was unnecessarily cumbered; while the life and the power and the salvation are the inalienable inheritance of Mary while she sits in calmness at the feet of the Saviour.

Let not then exaggerations, or polemical inferences, frighten us in vain. We may grant to the Romanist, as well as to many Anglicans, that the Church was before the Bible, as a speaker is before his voice; and that Holy Scripture is not the foundation of the Christian faith so much as its creature, its expression, and its embodiment. But it will not therefore follow that this Holy Scripture should be sealed in dead languages, or withheld from men thirsting for the words of life. Nor ought any modern mystic to persuade us that the history of the Divine dealings of old is ever useless to the human mind; and yet we may concede that the two things from which Scripture sprang are for ever in the world,—I mean the conscience of man, and the Holy Spirit of God. From these two, meeting in the Church, the Bible derives its origin, its authority, and its power to persuade.

I exhort, therefore, every soul who hears me to value highly the Bible; to read it, pray over it, understand it. But yet beware of lying for God; or of ascribing infallibility to men of like passions with our-

selves; or of sacrificing the spirit which enlivens to the letter which deadens.

So may you deserve the praise of those ancient Berœans, who are ever honoured because they were *more ingenuous* (εὐγενέστεροι), or because their minds were candid in receiving the truth. So too will you be, not infidels but believers in Holy Writ, when it tells you that its authors knew only in part, and prophesied only in part; so will you avoid attributing blasphemy to them, by calling the Word of God that which they profess to speak as *men*; and even to speak as fools; so will you not make them, as writers, more than they were as speakers; nor will you sever, as they did not sever, their inspiration from that of the congregation at large, when they exclaim, “I think that I too,” (δοκῶ δὲ κἀγὼ) that is, “I, as well as others, have the Spirit of God.” But above all, so will you be blessed, as servants of that living God who is never weary of creating, and whose promise is, that He will dwell among us; and so too disciples of Jesus, who prayed, not for his Apostles only, but for all who should believe through their word; whose most precious testament was, not, I give you the Bible, but, “I send you the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth;” and whose binding promise is, not, I am with the first generation of Christians, and possibly with the second, but, “LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD<sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Abundant proofs of the non-Petrine origin of the Epistle called St Peter's Second, are given in the second edition of Bunsen's *Hippolytus*, from whence, however, I did not learn it. Even Eusebius had said, “Of the writings named as Peter's, I know only one Epistle

genuine." *Hist. Eccl* iii. 3. The internal character of the Epistle corresponds with this external disavowal. But if any one asks me, Why then take your text from it? such a questioner, I presume, thinks that a sentiment cannot be true, or worthy of commentary, unless it be a particular Apostle's; that is to say, he thinks things are true because they are written, instead of being written because they are true; or again, he thinks that the Church has not authority sufficient to persuade even her own ministers what books they shall lecture upon. But to no one of these propositions am I able to assent; nor again do I feel any difficulty in adopting the sentiment of my text, whoever may have written it.

Having said positively that *nowhere* in Holy Scripture is the term "Word of God" made an equivalent or synonym for the Bible, I may refer to the Sermon on the Kingdom of God for an explanation of some texts usually misapplied. I did not make up my own mind on this specific point until after a consideration extending over many years. The two texts most favourable to the vulgar Pharisaism are perhaps St Mark vii. 13 and vii. 7; but in the one the thing intended is the Fifth Commandment, as we see from St Matthew xv. 4, 9, where also we find things both Levitical and Scriptural condemned by our Lord (see 10, 11): and in the other, the antithesis is not between written and unwritten, but between divine will and human precept. Perhaps *παράδοσις* means *precept* oftener than tradition.

It should however be clear that I know of no tradition, ecclesiastical or other, worthy to be named in the same day with St Paul's Epistles; and I admit *κατὰ συμβεβηκός* the approximate coextensiveness of our New Testament Scriptures and of Apostolic doctrine; only I cannot violate the first principles of Christianity itself, as well as of human reason, by putting the letter before the spirit, or the books before the religion, as our popular tradition does. We are rightly taught that "all Holy Scripture is written *for our instruction*." Whenever therefore it is used to stunt our knowledge, or fetter our spirits, it must be misapplied; as we read that it was by the great Tempter.

Respecting Cyrenius, though none of the solutions satisfy me, (and I should almost like to add to them, 'ΕΤΕΡΑ ΔΕ for 'ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ), I did not intend to decide the question, but to contrast its class with a different one. The Cretans had lying ascribed to them more than other Greeks, probably because they were great antiquarians.

Preached before the University of Cambridge on the *Second Sunday in Advent, Dec. 1854.*

## SERMON XX.<sup>1</sup>

*GOSPEL FREEDOM, NOT ANTINOMIANISM.*

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*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness.*

1 Peter ii. 16.

IT is natural to wish, that our own opinions may be confirmed by the judgment of those whose character we respect. Hence arises a feeling of disappointment, when we find that very eminent persons have not always welcomed great social or religious changes, which appear to us manifest improvements on what existed before them. We would gladly have numbered among the ornaments of the Reformation either the unspotted integrity of Sir Thomas More, or the learning alike sacred and profane, as well as the religious sensibility, of Erasmus. We can scarcely repress our surprise, that both these justly distinguished men should have started upon the same road as ourselves, and then have suddenly turned back. Nor again are instances wanting, which awaken a similar sentiment, as regards the first spread of the religion of the Cross. Who would not rejoice if Gamaliel, who seems to have been esteemed by his contemporaries no less for his piety than for his learn-

<sup>1</sup> Preached, with the exception of the conclusion, about 1851-2.

ing, had not merely counselled moderation in the treatment of the Apostles, but had ventured a little farther, and become partaker of their suffering in the name of Christ? Or who would not have triumphed if Seneca<sup>1</sup>, that remarkable thinker, whose rules of conduct scarcely yield in loftiness of conception to those of the Gospel, had upon meeting St Paul (as he might have met him) at Rome, acknowledged his own wisdom to be foolishness, in comparison of the quickening power which cometh down from above? But in these and many other such cases, good men seem to have shown a reluctance to adopt truths which we should not have expected.

It is of course easy to remark, that all such instances of shortcoming imply some fault on part of the characters by which they are exhibited. Are we not, however, permitted to believe, that He who knoweth whereof we are made, will judge every man with the largest allowance, as for the weakness of our faculties, so for the prepossessions of our education; that he will remember graciously how much error we imbibe almost with our mother's milk. how inveterate are the associations of early habit, and how closely intertwined the weed and the flower, the passion and the affection, the delusion and the piety, take root in our hearts, springing almost from one identical stem?

We may also go a step farther. Nor will it be an unprofitable employment for us to observe, that more reasons than we are at first aware of might well make

<sup>1</sup> Quintilian and M. Aurelius might be better instances.

a wise man hesitate before he embraced any such great change in belief and practice as either of those of which we have spoken. We can readily understand he would not foresee all the happier consequences which such a change was destined ultimately to produce, while the immediate evils might be palpable and striking. Nor are the evils, which are apt to attend a change in the religious feelings of an entire people, either few or slight. For a large mass of the grosser elements of human nature seems to be kept quiet more by custom than by any conviction of the will; a sort of necessity of acknowledging what others acknowledge, being in the sphere of many men's motives and actions almost what the force of gravity is in the physical world. Nothing is farther from my intention than to insinuate that our Maker did not intend us to rise above such an imperfect code of sentiment; but that such is the code which in fact extensively prevails, few persons will probably deny. The testimony of all history on the subject is as clear as it is melancholy. Wherever the old barriers, of whatever kind, which customarily opposed themselves to vice and crime have been removed, the tumultuous rush, as of many waters, has proclaimed clearly what fountains of bitterness have their source unnoticed even at our doors.

Bishop Latimer, for instance, tells us that "London was never so full of ill as in his time. Such was the profligacy of its youth, that he marvels the earth gaped not, to swallow it up. There were many that denied the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a heaven or a hell. Manly sports were exchanged for the



gaming-table. Divorces, with all classes, had become common; for marriage being declared no sacrament, many chose to interpret the declaration, as if it were no bond. The elementary bread of the eucharist was expressed by base and indecent nicknames; the ale-houses filled with profane disputants upon the mysteries of our faith, while the scoffers made songs upon them."

Such, according to Latimer<sup>1</sup>, were the licentious abuses, to which an evil disposition, where such already existed, greedily applied the materials furnished by the religious controversies of the time. Men who only knew that something which had been a check upon their passions was now in danger, hastened to avenge themselves for past constraint; they were invited only to protest against things Romish, but their real enmity was against things Christian; they were called to reform, but their object was to destroy.

It might almost startle my hearers, if I say that a practical perversion, such as I have above described, was made even of Christianity itself, on its first being preached to the world. Yet the Epistle of St Jude may furnish many indications that such was really the case. Even stronger than the language of Latimer are the terms in which the Apostle speaks of men who turned the grace of God into wantonness, mockers, murmurers, sensual, speaking evil of things which they had not mind to comprehend, and indulging freely whatever passion they had in common with the brutes. Nay even St Paul tells us of one of his favourite Churches, in which he had laboured long, that vice was practised

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Blunt's *Reformation*.

there, in an<sup>1</sup> unnatural degree of novelty, not known even among the Gentiles. This last case indeed is mentioned as a thing entirely foreign to the usual tenor of Christian practice, and as calling for the sharpest penalty of Church discipline. Still such a case had happened even among the flock; while among the raging wolves, as the various heretics are styled who surrounded the Apostle's fold, we cannot doubt, we have indeed all the evidence the case admits of, that the reckless Antinomianism of their principles extended itself to their practical life.

Here then occurs the question, was there any point in the genuine doctrines of Christianity, with a one-sided aspect of which ill-disposed persons might readily sympathize, and so pervert what was in itself good to their own destruction? Nor need we, brethren, look far for an answer. For although Christianity was the bringing in of a better hope, it was the doing away with a covenant of obligation which had existed before; it was a building up, but also a casting down; a binding with stronger ties, and yet a loosening of ties, which had previously kept many a wayward heart in something like subjection. Even now many good men shrink from allowing the full extent of St Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans as to the entire abrogation even of the moral law, as delivered by Moses, in its relation to ourselves; they shrink from the consequences which might seem to follow such an admission, and would willingly argue, that the ceremonial law only is abolished, but the moral law as written in the Old

<sup>1</sup> As Cicero says, "*scelus incredibile et inauditum.*"

Testament remains in unbroken vigour. But now, great as is the weight which should justly be allowed to such scruples, and entirely true as is the conclusion to which they tend, that the divinely-sanctioned principles of Right are as immutable as is the faithful witness in heaven, it must still be admitted that St Paul no longer sends his converts even to the Ten Commandments for their rule of life any more than for their instrument of justification; but that he considers the entire law of morality, as well as ritual, which preceded the coming of our Lord, whether that law was given from Mount Sinai, or whether it was imperfectly attested by the consciences of the Gentiles, as having been only a schoolmaster; as in short an inadequate expression of an eternal truth; as a thing, therefore, of which the spirit would remain for ever, but of which the outward letter, in its relation to ourselves, had already passed away.

It is obvious how much must have depended upon the nature of the soil in which the seed of such a doctrine was sown. Many there were, perhaps of Jewish descent, who heard gladly of a tedious or expensive ceremonial being no longer required; but who did not simultaneously adopt the idea, that their new worship was to be the dedication of their mind to the heart-searching Author of all goodness. Many also appear to have been, whose blood and whose sentiments were alike derived from the far East, who caught eagerly at any language implying a double nature in man; and perversely argued, that if the higher spirit kept itself pure in thought, the licentiousness of the animal nature

implied no sin. From these, and other such causes, many men in the age of the Apostles turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. One man heard of an unearthly kingdom, and imagined that earthly rulers might be therefore set aside; another was told of an universal brotherhood among Christians, and inferred that therefore no social distinctions should be retained; a third argued, if Christ were the Messiah, why should his Jewish kinsmen after the flesh still bear the Roman yoke; while to very many, unlearned and unstable, the true doctrine of the Mosaic law being no longer our highest code or ultimate criterion of right and wrong, became a dispensation from the necessity of obeying those words, and embodying in life those principles, which (though heaven and earth pass away) shall yet abide (like their Divine Author) for ever.

There seems no reason to believe that such abuse of their doctrine induced the Apostles to alter the truth itself. They knew that their Master would be a stone of stumbling as well as the head-stone in the corner. Hence they might indeed grieve, but they could not alter his Gospel, though in vessels already fitted for destruction it became a savour of death. It does, however, clearly appear, that the Apostles used every reasonable exertion to guard against the tares, which threatened to destroy their good seed. How many injunctions might be quoted, bidding men "not sin, that grace might abound," but rather to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour;" not to do evil that good might come; not to resist even oppression; not to let their Master's name be blasphemed among the

Gentiles; not to become servants again in a moral bondage from which they had escaped; and, finally, not to forget, that although by the works of the law no flesh had been justified, yet without the works of the Gospel no man should see the Lord!

It would only be wearisome to multiply instances of such language. But perhaps one of the most probable opinions respecting that Antichrist so often alluded to in the Epistles is, that it meant the spirit of Antinomianism. St John indeed has given us a decisive test of what he meant by antichrists, in applying the term to those of his contemporaries, who denied the reality of our Lord's coming in the flesh. But then it is to be noticed that these same persons were also generally among the more licentious sect of the Gnostics, who professedly sinned because there was no law. Hence the earnest and plaintive entreaty of him whom Jesus loved; "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness, is righteous; or he that doeth justice, is justified;" and again, "He that committeth sin, committeth also lawlessness;" as if the headstrong defiance of restraint was rather an aggravation of the inherent badness of any bad act. If then we turn from St John's first Epistle to St Paul's language to the Thessalonians, where his "man of sin" is described as the lawless one, or the Antinomian, and his manifestation as being in all lawlessness, or Antinomianism, we shall at least obtain a probable clue to that danger which the Apostles of Christ thought the greatest by which his Church could ever be assailed. Can there, in truth, my brethren, be anything more terrible, than human nature owning no

restraint save its own impulses; calling perhaps those very impulses in their worst form by the most holy names; and striding forward, deceiving and deceived, to do whatever is pleasant in its own eyes; impatient of man's warning, and incredulous of God's; blind in its desires, and reckless in satisfying them; striving by unscrupulous indulgence to satisfy a thirst which refuses to be slaked until it consume. Many, brethren, are the forms of this world-long disease—Antinomianism; and strange the disguises it may wear. Its first whispers are subtle as those of the serpent; its language, as it pleads for life, is plausible; but its end is destruction.

It is no part of my purpose to-day, to direct your thoughts to those gigantic manifestations of this disease, in which it has poisoned states, thrown away creeds, murdered kings, or trampled down altars. Neither do I now dwell on what some consider a probability that Antinomianism will be the predominant character of those last times in which the Son of Man shall come, and scarcely find faith on the earth. Sufficient evil for each of us to watch against may be found in its power of disturbing the little commonwealth of a single mind. What is that which says to each of us, the fruit of the tree is pleasant of look and desirable to taste; if we eat it we shall not surely die? What is that which says in our anger, "do we not well to be angry?" and in our pleasure, that no sorrow shall come nigh us; which bids us relax our prayers, because God has now surely made our hill so strong that we shall never be moved; or which makes us weary of sermons, for have we not already a truer feeling of spiritual Christianity

than that man who troubles us? or which says to us of every duty, is it not a weariness? and of every safeguard, is it not unnecessary? of every external restraint, is it not an impertinence? perhaps of every self-denial, is it not Romish? of every pleasure, is it not lawful? of every wholesome and sharp remorse, is it not superstitious, since Christ has died for us? and by degrees, of every sin, is it not allowable—are we not God's chosen? we shall not surely die. Some such thing as that, brethren, is the spirit of Antinomianism, or the refusal to recognise the fear of God as the practical guide of our lives. Take heed of its beginning. To slacken prayer, to shrink from judging ourselves, to ignore or refuse any wholesome restraint of divine service, sacred book, holy-day, law, custom, opinion of others, or checks of our own scruples, may be to disregard little things, even as those do who perish by little and little. But perhaps I can lend you no better aid against such abuse of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, than by explaining throughout the remainder of this sermon, in what sense we enjoy liberty. and how it should not be made a cloke of maliciousness.

First, then, St Peter in our text happens to be speaking primarily with a reference to the troubled politics of his own time. Cemented as the fabric of many ancient kingdoms was with idolatrous rites, sometimes almost deifying men, and generally assuming principles which the early Christian could not recognise, they soon lost their hold on the affections of those persecuted communities which met in upper chambers

and in catacombs, worshipping a God whom their governors had not known, and consoling themselves by the assurance that their franchise was in the heavens. In the eyes of men so persecuted and so consoled, imperial Rome became Babylon, and even the earthly Jerusalem, though endeared by sacred associations, waxed pale and cold to their gaze in comparison of that city not built with hands, which they already saw in aspiring visions come down as it were from heaven, and embrace men in a holier kingdom. They were free then from earthly ties; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. They were ready, if need called them, to witness a good confession by suffering; but the honors of that pagan Babylon were in their eyes contemptible; her friendship a snare; her service in some cases a sin. But then came the question from some half-reclaimed Hebrew, whose keen patriotism still yearned to see the morning star not only risen in its brightness, but coming down in carnal millennium upon the earthly Jerusalem, might they not (like St Peter) smite with the sword? Was not the time come when Jew and Christian in concert might shake off the yoke of Pagan Rome?

To all such questionings the Apostle answers quietly "As free, and not making your liberty the cloke of maliciousness." *Wonderful* power of this strange religion of the Cross! Simply to suffer, and by suffering to conquer. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it. But yet history informs us such was the result. They that took the sword perished by the sword. The price of slaves in the market of



Rome was cheapened by the sale of those unhappy thousands, who dashed themselves in the desperation of a gallant but unavailing patriotism against the legions of Hadrian. But God, to whom vengeance belongeth, also brought on the time when she who had pressed the cup of servitude to the lips of all nations, drank it herself to the dregs, and had it filled for her again and again. Only those slaves, simpletons, priests, women, who had discharged every lawful duty out of a principle of conscience to the empire in which they were not tolerated, cherished among themselves the grain of mustard-seed, whose tree grew until it overshadowed the earth. Now the secret of this triumph was simply *suffering* in the name of Christ. It was being free, but not using their liberty for a cloke of maliciousness.

Secondly, I content myself with merely reminding you that Christians were free from the ceremonial law of Moses, because the Lord who bought them with his own blood, had fulfilled its types, given the final object to its sacrifices, and transmuted its shadows into substance. Here too the Apostles made their liberty no cloke of maliciousness. They had heard that God was a Spirit, and therefore present everywhere; yet they went up at the ninth hour, our own canonical hour for afternoon service, and worshipped in the temple which the High and Holy One that dwelleth in eternity had called his house of prayer. So again they were determined, as we see in St Paul, that no man had the right to judge them respecting the sabbath-day; the crime of sabbath-breaking was against the

Jewish ritual, and could only belong to the past; yet did they not therefore forget means of mutual improvement, but assembled together on the first day of the week for prayer, for almsgiving, for sharing the consecrated symbols of that bread which cometh down from heaven. But

Thirdly, it is more difficult to explain how Christians had become free even from the moral law, so far as that law is written in the Old Testament. It was, in fact, because they had died to it, and law, of which earth is the sphere, can take no cognizance of dead men. When therefore they became in baptism partakers, as it were, of our Lord's death, being baptized into the death of Christ, they passed from the jurisdiction of the letter; but on rising again into a world of new feelings, motives, and principles, they found this renovation wrought by the power of a Person who was himself the embodied wisdom of God; and who was therefore the highest of all law. For this unwritten Word of God is himself not only the Divine Giver, but the true model, and the everlasting principle, which the ideas filtered through the mind of Moses (yet fresh from Egypt, and surrounded by a people in a low state of civilisation) had been able but partially to shadow forth, giving it (we may say) roughly in a rude outline.

But now, if such were the power by which the Christians were raised, their moral resurrection was not into a state of lawlessness, but into a state of higher law. If the letter to which they died had lost its power over them, the Spirit which raised them into new life

had acquired a double title to their obedience. By the works of the law therefore, truly no flesh should be justified; but yet the works of the Gospel, which we acknowledge to be not so much ours as God working in us, remained for every Christian to do. Hence, (it is St Paul that argues,) the righteousness which the law aimed at, but could not attain from the weakness of our nature, is now (*not imputed*, but actually) fulfilled in us, who, if we are Christians, walk not according to lawless nature, but according to the law of a conscience trained by the expanding providence, and enlightened by the quickening Spirit of God our Father, our Saviour, and our Friend.

Now, for any one to suppose that sincere Christians, or men penetrated by the spirit of St Paul's reasonings, could make their liberty the cloke of Antinomian maliciousness is the most absurd self-contradiction in the world. Christians, falsely so called, would do so; just as knowledge, falsely so called, is in fact ignorance. But the true Christian recognised in the Lord who had redeemed him the highest law; a law which converted the heart, and gave understanding to the simple; the divine wisdom turned into the divine Word, the intelligence by which all things were made coming forth as the love by which all things are redeemed, and as the expression by which whatever concerns our salvation is revealed. Just then as some great master of language or of any other science might smile at the suspicion, that by quietly putting aside some grammar or manual offered him as an aid, he intended really to disparage the unchangeable laws which regulate the

expression of thought, which no one had either studied more thoroughly, or observed at length with more unconscious accuracy than himself; so St Paul might exclaim "O foolish Galatians," to those who would have sent him back to Leviticus and Numbers for the highest expression of the eternal will of God; or again, who thought, that by teaching the freedom of Christians from such an inadequate utterance of the unutterable, he intended to encourage them in a liberty as a cloke of maliciousness. How could those who had learnt to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and to know Jesus whom He had sent as the Christ, be better for any of the first table of the commandments? or how could those who loved their neighbour as themselves require the minute specification of the second table? Or what need had they who prayed without ceasing, and were fervent in spirit, to be reminded of holidays, and places, and writings, save as useful helps and mementos to keep alive in themselves a sense of the strength by which they stood, and communion with the fountain from which it sprang? Yet again and again we observe throughout the Apostolical epistles, a profound consciousness that God is not mocked; with his most holy and most blessed word, as it abides in the heavens, there is no variableness, or shadow of changing; He is gracious to them that walk by its spirit; but to them that forsake it, and will not have him to rule over them, He is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now just as some constitutions are so sickly that the least departure from strict regimen injures them,

so we all, beloved brethren, are so infected with a sickness of the heart and will, tossed to and fro by a disturbance of the balance of the powers of our nature, that the least carelessness as regards the safeguards suggested by our Divine physician may be the beginning of a decline, taking us down into the chambers of hell. Safer therefore is the half-instructed and more child-like Christian, who thinks scarcely anything lawful to himself, than the over presumptuous spiritualist who fancies that all things are expedient. Let him then that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear. By grace ye are saved; and that grace, wherein alone ye can stand free from actual sin, not being your own, if you tempt its withdrawal, you tempt your own destruction.

Now then be free, brethren. And first, be free from fear. Think not, you can either keep an account of merit with God, or that he keeps account of your failures and shortcomings in order to condemn you. Rather believe that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blots out both the handwriting of the external law, and the deeper sentence of conscience which spoke condemnation against us. For his thought is larger than our thought; and though He might charge his angels with folly, yet remembering whereof we are made, He does not plead with us with his great power, but He puts strength into us. Only come to him with that mind of Christ, which is love; and if you see the Father, as He is uncovered by Christ, you cannot choose but love him; then will this perfect love

cast out fear. When we yield ourselves to his holy will, we find that his will is our salvation.

In this freedom of God, be also free from the fear of man. It is the righteous who has cause to be bold, even if he be naturally weak. Therefore, if you suffer for well-doing, or if the Pharisees cast out your name, because, like your Master, you bear witness to the truth, fear them not.

Be free also from servile and superstitious value of days and ceremonies, as if in themselves they were ends, or had a penal necessity. Such things are helps and instruments like medicine; and sometimes like food; but it is the Lord who giveth the souls of his people the blessing of health. There is no wisdom in neglecting such things; nor yet much in letting them become a compulsory bondage to us.

Again, be free from such a worship of the letter as that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who thought that in searching the Scriptures<sup>1</sup>, and counting their syllables, they had eternal life. Such use of the letter, as St Paul says, is deadening. Nor think that God, who sends forth the Spirit that is holy, supreme, and life-giving, has no better guide for us, than Judaic precepts and the records of men who were but straining forward through parables and through imperfections to the light of the fulness of time.

Neither fear for a moment because such imperfec-

<sup>1</sup> That the word *ἐπευρῆτε* in St John v. 39 is an indicative, appears grammatically from the entire context; and historically from the practice of the Scribes, as in the Masora. Nor does our Lord ever rebuke them for *neglecting* the Scripture, but for *not knowing* it; i. e. not knowing its evangelic pregnancy and its spirit.

tions, or signs of humanity, are pointed out in our sacred records of old, that therefore the truth and providence of God can fail. He who graciously called Israel out of Egypt to be his son, will accompany his spiritual Israel even to old age; and if He watched over the childhood of his Church, He will not despise the fulness of her strength.

But lastly, dear brethren, beware of turning such a liberty into licentiousness. Take the whole armour of God, not only against external foes, but against the maliciousness of a wayward spirit in yourselves. Take faith in the unseen and ineffable; take the hope of everlasting life; take the utterance of God in prayer and preaching and solemn song; take righteousness, softened by love towards your fellow-men, remembering wherein consist all the law and the prophets. Take also soberness and vigilance for yourselves, the remembrance of the Cross within, and something of its pattern upon your lives. Above all, take ever the love of God constraining you, and a remembrance of that price wherewith we gained this freedom, even the voluntary offering of the soul of Jesus our Lord in death. Let that remembrance make you strive to partake of the Spirit which dwelt emphatically in Him; so may you too partake of his priesthood, ever offering up the spiritual consecration of your lives and bodies; and so, being abundantly free from legal scriptures, you may obey a far more penetrating and heart-binding law; so, having died unto sin, died unto fear, died unto penal precepts, you may live, through the Spirit of Jesus, as children and servants of the life-giving God.

## SERMON XXI.

### OUR KINDRED TO GOD.

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*For we are also His offspring.* Acts xvii. 28.

It is generally supposed that the two great motives of religion are hope and fear. The exceeding happiness of heaven, and a keen desire of attaining it,—the more terrible doom of the unrepentant, and our instinctive shrinking from all that it involves,—are propounded as the two great instruments for turning Man from sin, and for restoring him to fellowship with the Spirit of God. But may we not ask, are there not other motives, somewhat higher in their nature, and not less lively in their operation? Is not LOVE as strong as death? and does not gratitude, both for God's general bounty in the realm of nature, and for his special loving-kindness in the kingdom of grace, deserve a more prominent place than is generally assigned to it? What shall I render unto the Lord, says the Psalmist, for all his mercies? We ought not to be selfish in our religion; lest, in fact, we be venturing on holy ground without having taken the shoes off our feet.

But we are often told that the love of self is a primary principle of our nature: and many of the



maxims given to direct our conduct, e. g., "Honesty is the best policy," seem to betray a lurking conviction that expediency in this low sense is the test of right. Now certainly we cannot deny that human motives are generally mixed. We may even admire the wisdom and the merey, which have so arranged the world, that our duty and our happiness shall in the long run coincide. "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all other things shall be added unto you." So our Heavenly Father deals with us as with children. He makes what is good still farther attractive as being pleasant and expedient. Yet he meant us not to linger in the twilight of imperfect motives, and secondary considerations, but to press forward, until by the force of habit we take delight in our duty for its own sake, and rejoice in the very light of that divine countenance which is both the source and the concentration of all moral goodness, purity, and love. Thus men too bribe, as it were, their children or their pupils, by rewards and prizes. But who would have a child obey his parent only from the selfish desire of some particular reward? Do we not rather endeavour by such means to awaken the moral instinct, to implant the habit of doing right, and look forward anxiously for the day when reflexion may bring a sensitiveness of conscience to the real nature of actions, whether amiable or hateful, right or wrong? Even so we cherish but slender hopes of the student, to whom knowledge is only a trade for the sake of bread; in whose mind the deep utterance of poet, or saint, or sage, finds no echo; or in whom the history of great or good men kindles no emulation of

spirit. We did wish the one to obey, and the other to study; but the obedience was for the sake of moral, (by which I here mean the same as *spiritual*,) training; the other was for the sake of that wisdom, which alone can prevent even conscience from being a blind guide, and which shews us the path of life.

Perhaps in this circumstance we may trace, even more legibly than elsewhere, the footsteps of a righteous Governor of the world, that by such training as has been rapidly sketched, a higher principle of action is imperceptibly developed. The fingers, which at first from mere vanity or from blind obedience stretch out alms to the needy, are thus schooled to obey an impulse of purer compassion, which will gradually stir in the heart. The public services of religion, which may at first have been attended from mere fashion, will often, either by the contagious sympathy of prayer, or by some earnest word amidst the foolishness of preaching, implant the notion of a heart-searching Spirit, to whom alone such worship could be rationally addressed<sup>1</sup>, and persuade the formal church-goer that he too has a soul to be saved, as well as an example to give. We see a glorious instance of such training in the history of the Hebrew people. How little there is in the law of Moses which can properly be called spiritual! Yet under the influence of those solemn services, which it strictly enjoined, grew up that sensitive tenderness of

<sup>1</sup> Where indeed means are mistaken for an end, they are apt to retard it; but the very indignation which true-hearted men feel at such an abuse, then comes in, and should be reckoned as part of the Means. Thus the Prophets are not alien to the Priesthood, but akin.

conscience which breathed in the pathetic strains of the Psalmist, and broke like startling thunder in the grand indignation of the Prophets. Here we see Almighty God, who knew what was in man's heart, and how our minds work or are wrought upon, training up a people by outward worship to heartfelt devotion; bringing them by a course of discipline from habits to feelings, from precepts to principles, from the letter to the spirit. Not but that in a way<sup>1</sup> the life is before the body, and the feeling before the habit; but yet we seem to find that discipline may be made a cradle for thought; and the lower employed as a scaffolding to reach the higher. We ought not, however, either in education or in religion to set the means above the end; or think the reward worth so much as the conduct which it was only intended to encourage. We should beware of lowering devotion into calculation.

We may even appeal, in support of this assertion, to the common practice of the world. For, although the motives of the best men are imperfect, and those of bad men never rise above the vulgar standard of doing right so far as it is their interest, we find the purer and better rule can scarcely ever with safety be disclaimed. Scarcely any public speaker would venture, even in addressing a heathen assembly, to propound mere self-interest as the only criterion by which a course of policy should be tested. Some pretext of piety or right, justice or honour, is generally alleged, and the allegation (even when least sincere), is still an uncon-

<sup>1</sup> This qualification might be more broadly put; and perhaps that which it qualifies ought to be reconsidered.

scious testimony to the existence of a tribunal within every man's heart, where the cause of God is still pleaded against our corrupt passions by an unseen Advocate; and where (probably) some forecast of the final judgment of Him, from whom no secret is hid, may be (as it were) *rehearsed* day by day.

Nor, again, is this merely the case in theory. For do not most ranks and professions of men often devote themselves to tasks where there is either no inducement of interest, or where it would be the most inadequate reward? The soldier gives his life for honor, or for duty; the physician enters the chamber of fever-stricken poverty to exercise the godlike art of healing; the scholar, if he be worthy of his vocation, lives laborious days for the chance of scattering some spiritual seed, which may bear fruit when his frame has mouldered in the dust; the statesman undergoes all galling libels and stupid misconstructions, for which the highest salary were scant reward if it were not accompanied by the consciousness of having laboured for a nation's weal. What shall I say of Howard visiting prisons, of Clarkson striving against the slave trade, of Henry Martyn preaching in Persia, Felix Neff in his Alpine parish, James Davies in his village school? Did not these all strive to do good in their generation from some higher inspiration than that of its being their interest?

Now is it possible that, of all men living, the Christian only, considered as a Christian, should have no higher motive than mere selfish instincts of personal hope and fear? To acquiesce in such a supposition would really be to rest in "beggarly elements," and to

make the "salt of the earth" an instrument of its corruption. It would be to confine, by the awe of Divine sanctions, the highest intellect and the most earnest conscience within the narrow range of those lower motives, which are intended only to be the foundation of better things. Doubtless God planted the principle of fear in our nature for some good purpose. The warnings of his holy servants, recorded in Scripture, are occasionally and in part addressed to this passion. It teaches us caution, and supplies a sort of armour to our weakness. Often also it is the channel through which those startling warnings are conveyed to the conscience, without which it will not rise from its slumber. But if such a feeling awakens our life, it does not promote our growth. For it is not a generous one: it seldom expands: a character formed entirely upon it, or, indeed, entirely upon any calculation of self-interest, cannot conceive worthily of God, but is apt to be alternately crouching and harsh, disingenuous and unjust. The wonder, indeed, is, that the frequent and almost exclusive appeals which some teachers make to such motives, and their attempts almost to intensify selfishness, have not a still more debasing effect on the character. Such would probably be the result, if the instinctive conscience of men in general was not really sounder than the maxims which some of their monitors put forward. Men do, after all, act from mutual affection and association, controlled (perhaps unconsciously) in their intercourse with each other by that wholesome network of influences (such as habit, opinion, and sympathy) with which Almighty God encompasses human

society, and which he has made a channel with many mouths<sup>1</sup>, through which some at least of the lessons of his inspiration flow. Under such influences are cherished many of the virtues to which the tone of doctrine, considered by some more directly religious, would have afforded but slender nourishment. For our Heavenly Father thus drops his dew, not always on the fleece of Gideon, but sometimes on the ground all around it: and we have read how his Spirit has listed to blow, not only among the schools of the prophets (where, however, it may have dwelt in larger measure), but also through the womanly compassion of Rahab in Jericho, and the filial piety of Ruth in Moab. Nor should it be forgotten how often our Lord delights to place the outcast Samaritan in favourable contrast with the more directly religious Jew.

We may consider it a signal blessing to a land when the Almighty so diffuses the discernment of spiritual vision, that they who minister in his beautiful sanctuary both remember the commission, which is emphatically theirs, through the terror of the Lord to persuade men, and also rise to the conception of whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever are amiable, whatsoever are of good repute, as fit and proper motives by which they may kindle in men's hearts a faith working by love, towards Him from whom all good things must flow. They are wise who can hear in the market-place as well as in the cloister some echoes of the Divine voice ever pleading by conscience, by shame, by association, and regard for

<sup>1</sup> In social hours, who Christ would see,  
Must turn all tasks to Charity.

the opinion of others, in behalf of that law of Right, which is so often as it were the mirror of the Divine face on earth; they are happy who can read in every dispensation of Providence—in nature, in art, in spiritual grace—signs of a Father's care, embellishing even our temporal home, yet reminding us that it is but the shadow of good things to come.

Even so, brethren, the Apostle of the Gentiles, though many of his arguments bear trace alike of an ardent temper and of an intellect trained in Rabbinic lore, yet turned from the wonder-working power of miracles and tongues to shew his disciples a more excellent way; and that way was love. He remembers how of old the Psalmist heard Jehovah say, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him." He knows, too, how the great preferment, with the desire of which God kindled his own ambition, consisted in those great things which He taught him that he should suffer for His Name's sake. Nor did he grudge this labour of love. Nay, love, he thought, was greater than even faith or hope; for it was the acme of the climax to which they were only steps. Many indeed have thought that he makes faith itself draw its life from love. Certainly he does not stop short of the higher motive. His argument often comes round to it, when he might seem bent only on some local peculiarity; or, at least, he is often led by his own loving and sympathizing spirit to take advantage of some local allusion in order to imbue men with a feeling that heaven is their true home, and God their highest Father. Thus, at Corinth, he sees the games

on which the inhabitants of the isthmus prided themselves as the sacred inheritance of antiquity: he reminds them of a more solemn contest and an unfading garland. At Philippi, he found a people exulting in their Roman citizenship: he tells them that their truer franchise is in heaven; that they are citizens of a more abiding city than her of the seven hills. At Athens, he finds altars to all the divine attributes (and amongst others to mercy) as usually recognised and personified by name; but also, one erected in a spirit of scrupulous piety, which feared to omit any proper object of worship, to the unknown gods of Europe and Asia. He seizes upon the occasion, and says, you already worship, without knowing his name, the same Deity as myself: whom then ye unknowingly reverence, him I declare unto you more distinctly. He remembers, that, in the same favoured abode of literature, certain poets had risen to the conception of something kindred between the human mind and its eternal Father, whom Moses had represented as saying: "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." Here then, again, the Apostle does not stay to inquire, whether the notions of Aratus and Moses precisely coincided, but he takes advantage of the concession, and starts from it as his premise: "Seeing then we are God's kindred (or offspring), we ought not to think that He is like to silver or stone, or that his ineffable presence can be limited to temples made with hands. Heaven is his throne, and the universe his temple, and the heart of man is his most chosen altar."

Not that we need for a moment believe the Apostle,



who elsewhere desires all Divine service to be done decently and in order, would have made this spiritual character of the Deity an excuse for the irreverent and cold-hearted neglect of whatever sanctuary may have been set apart for the worship of God's holy name. His spirit too, like that of the Psalmist, would have burnt within him, to see all the carved work broken down with axes and hammers; or to find those portions of a church, where God's poor assemble, meanly naked and desolate, while some rustic dignitary dwells apart in a little palace of curtains or cedar. But in this sermon at Athens he is absorbed by a greater subject. He is bent upon propounding our original kindred to God, who made us in his image, as a ground for offering to him the oblation of our mind and being. He mentions the resurrection; for it is both our property as the Divine kindred, and it is a cardinal condition of our union with the Only-begotten, whom God raised from the dead: he mentions also the judgment; for it is a memento of our responsibility, and an office to be exercised by our Lord. He does not mention the propitiation for sin, either because the Athenians were not prepared for the doctrine; or possibly because he may have himself considered it, (as many of the primitive doctors of the Church did,) as rather a necessary accompaniment of our Lord's Incarnation than its ultimate end: and his argument is here drawn, not from Jewish or Scriptural sources, but from those broad facts of the Divine creation and the human conscience, which in his Epistle to the Romans he values so highly, and which are the common property of civilized mankind. Any

illustration, therefore, from the sacrifices of the Law would have been here as much out of place as in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is strictly appropriate.

Now may we not venture, brethren, with the Apostle's example before us, to take the fact of our being the offspring of God, as at once a stimulus and an encouragement to a God-like life? What is God? the source, I suppose, of all the good we have either known or can conceive. And what are we? God said, "Let us make man in our own image." In a sermon upon these last words, Dr South has argued that we may infer the nature of this Divine image, by removing, from our idea of man, whatever is obviously an abuse of his original powers. Take excess from his anger, take away cunning from his ingenuity, pride from his sense of active intellect, vain-gloriousness from his benevolence, and envy from his emulation: you may arrive, by such a process, at a probable notion of what God intended Adam to be. You have, as it were, the Divine image, in the blots and blurs removed.

But may we then venture, you ask, to predicate (even in their perfection) like things of the Deity and of ourselves? *Not*, perhaps, without the largest allowance for those veils of sense, and matter, and infirmity, through which we perceive only the images<sup>1</sup> of eternal objects, and not the very objects themselves. It would seem, however, as if we are warranted in magnifying to the utmost of our power our conception of whatever is most pure and excellent, and most commanding, and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinth. xiii. 12, where the Greek implies *figurativeness* in our knowledge, more than from the English might seem.

most bountiful, and in saying, that either this, or something analogous, is the image under which in this veil of shadows it is proper for us to conceive of the Deity. We may take all nature with its stores, all art with its beauty, all intellect with its contrivance, all justice with its grand (though perhaps slow) retribution, all teaching with its patience, all love with its tenderness, all mercy, so far as it does not outrage justice, but rather rejoices against it by some signal display of self-sacrifice; and all these things we may affirm—either in themselves, or in some higher archetype—belong to that image in which God made man: the image of Him, of whom the Apostle testifies, “We are also his offspring.”

Now, brethren, in whatever we fall short of such an image, we are so far degenerate. We are so far like children of some noble family, stolen by thieves or gipsies, and taught in savage places all practices degrading and unworthy of their origin. For we are God’s offspring. Why should we be alienated from him by wicked minds?

If you can find any higher, or more blessed and life-giving Father, do not halt between two opinions; but go boldly and seek him. If the Father of lies delight you more, go and lie. If you can find one, or anything, more lovely and more attractive, pour out your greedy glance and be enamoured of its charms. But what is it that you love elsewhere? Is it the fair outline and luxuriant growth of “mountain hoary, winding shore, and deepening glen”?—it is God who setteth fast the strong mountains, and is girded about with majesty. Or do you admire the breathing marble

and glowing canvass, in which creations of the most passionate fancy still obey the geometrical rule of the severest art?—it is God who gave the eye to behold, and the brain to conceive, the outward forms from which hints were caught and the mind capable of combining them. Or are you more struck by the moral grandeur of well-ordered communities, and of soils, whose fertile crop is manly virtue? It is God by whom kings reign or senates decree justice: his providence and his Spirit only restrain the madness of the people. Would you copy the energy which founds families and transmits lands called after its name?—the Lord is He of whom we know, Except He build the house, their labour is but lost that build it. Or do you count all great and commanding qualities as dross compared with the spiritual graces of beneficence, justice, mercy, and truth? Whose hand then filleth all things living with plenteousness, save the Lord's? Or who, save the Lord, avengeth the cause of the fatherless and widow? Who, by strange providences, brings hidden crimes to light, and opens in after years the secret chambers of iniquity to the gaze of Israel and the sun? Who plants the sting of conscience in the heart of the wrong-doer, save the Lord? or who, in more sternly-brooding wrath, suffers the criminal to go on hardening himself, until his own intoxication of mind becomes his more deadly ruin? Or what is all human merey but only a hesitating remedy for the imperfection of our judgment? How faint an image of the Divine, which, knowing all our guilt and all its hopelessness, made the greatness of our ruin a reason for saving us; and, seeing that there

was no intercessor, became itself incarnate; triumphing in strange reconciliation over Divine justice by satisfying it, and over the obdurate heart of man by propounding to it a more wonderful and exceeding superabundance of Divine compassion, caring for it while keeping swine as it were in a strange country; seeking it afar off in the wilderness of vain desires; and calling it back from its wanderings with the tender cry, "My son, my son!" Such is the mercy of God. And as for his truth, did ever any seek the Lord and fail to find him? Ask of all the generations of old, in any nation of the world, if the ways of God's law, when honestly followed to the best of man's light, have not been ways of pleasantness; and if all misfortunes have not been light compared to the pains of a guilty conscience, the pangs of shame and remorse?

Should we not then, on the whole, acknowledge, that whatever things are lovely and excellent on earth, they are but images of that Divine perfection, which must therefore be better fitted than anything in the world to engage our love, and to claim our willing obedience? Surely we are not incapable of feeling some approach to a disinterested affection and an active gratitude to this holder up of our souls in life, our bringer back from the gates of death. Let us love Him; for He is worthy of all love, and we are also his offspring. But if any one here think this motive to obedience fitter rather for Paradise than for Man driven into exile and scared by the flaming sword, let him please to remember that St Paul has used it, and therefore he thought it consistent with that "lost

estate" of man, of which he is himself the greatest doctor. But the same Apostle everywhere teaches, that as in Adam all, so in Christ all. Whatever we lose by the one, we at least gain as much by the other. For, if the second Adam were not powerful to restore all that the first has lost, he would not be the Son of God; and if He were not willing, he could no longer be the Son of Man. So often as we follow the earthly man in mixing the knowledge of evil with good, and perverting our great capacities according to the devilish whisper of some serpent sin, so often we estrange ourselves from the garden<sup>1</sup> of God's delight; then we prey on our own hearts, and waste ourselves in wandering in a far country, which is a land of flight from Him whom the pure in heart behold—for God beholds the wicked afar off; but when we come to ourselves, remembering whose we are, and go back to our Father, asking his Holy Spirit to make us partakers of the likeness of the Man from heaven, then God gives us the spirit of adoption, and calls us sons again, and is not ashamed to dwell among us, and to be called our God. Then He becomes nigh to us, even a very present help. Then we are also his offspring and akin to him, by being made like him in the character (though I dare not say in the essence<sup>2</sup>) of our minds. When will men learn that Christian humility is not to be an excuse for doing

<sup>1</sup> οὐκ ἔνι αἰσθητὰ ξύλα  
ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ, τοῦτ' ἔστω, ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ.

ORIGEN, *Eclg. in Gen.*

οὐ δεῖ περιέχεσθαι τοῦ γράμματος τ. γρ. ὡς ἀληθοῦς.

*Id. ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> κατὰ δύναμιν, οὐ κατ' οὐσίαν. S. Clem. Alex.

less, but comes of earnest desire to do more? It is not wallowing in the mire, as palsied by despair; but it is deliberately stooping, or drawing back, that we may spring higher. We may indeed be humbled when we think of what we, and all our race, have made ourselves; but we are encouraged when we remember what God intended us to be, and what he enables us to become, through the Spirit of his well-beloved Son. If our fall is great, much more our rising. For we have on our side One stronger than the strong; and He puts strength into us if we will only give ourselves entirely to Him.

Look down, then, brethren, and be ashamed even to kneel or draw nigh before Him whose name is Holy; for what are we in His sight! and how unworthy are we of being his children! Yet look up and rejoice, and draw nigh in faith; because His love is greater than all our shortcomings, and, by teaching us to call him "Our Father," He assures us that we are also his offspring. How much more then, now, may I ask you to let the love of God constrain you! If even godly Heathens were smitten with this great desire of becoming like to Him, after whom they felt as it were in darkness, how much more shall we listen to our blessed Saviour, and be persuaded by his gracious words, when he says, Do good, and be merciful, and be holy—and even, be perfect—even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect!

But if the great message of glad tidings, by which we are brought nigh to our Heavenly Father, could only be given us at the expense of the life of Him who bought it, we may see, in that wonderful obedience and

resignation of his soul in death, something which should move us to desire earnestly the same mind. Therefore, as we eat our peace-offerings and bless our cup of thanksgiving, let us remember on whose innocent head sin was laid, as in redeeming us He underwent the sharpness of death. Show forth the Lord's death to your mind's eye, until you desire earnestly to die unto sin; and until you catch, standing in thought under the Cross, something of that spirit wherewith he surrendered his own will to his Father's will, his cause to his Father's judgment, his life into his Father's hands. If such was that consecration of Himself by the well-beloved Son, the remembrance of which we are now about to plead before God, and before our own wayward hearts, such also, brethren, should be in some measure our willing consecration of our own prayers, thoughts, words, deeds, and desires. The love of God should constrain us to give ourselves to Him who desires our good. For, though Jesus, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, is inseparably the Son, and has in all things the pre-eminence—yet he is also the firstborn among many brethren; if he alone said, "My Father"—he has taught all his followers to say, "Our Father," and by reconciling us in the temper of our minds to God, he assures us once more, that **WE ARE ALSO HIS OFFSPRING.**

Written chiefly about 1851.

Finished, and preached, in 1855.

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## SERMON XXII.

### *THE DAY OF THE LORD.*

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*It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. Zechariah xiv. 6.*

WE frequently meet in Scripture with the phrase "day of the Lord." It is by no means universally used in the same unique or definite sense as we might have been inclined to expect. It denotes not one time, but many. For any signal manifestation of the Divine government of the world, or any such event as made men's hearts quake within them for fear, (whether it were battle or siege, earthquake or cholera,) is described as the day of the Lord. Hence our Saviour, in speaking of the distress which should befall his disciples, forewarns them of a time when they shall wish for one of the days of the Son of Man. That is to say, they would wish for such a period as the ancient Prophet desired when he exclaimed, "Oh that thou wouldest come down!" such a period as might make their persecutors remember themselves to be but men; and cease from wrong-doing, as if in presumptuous confidence that the arm of the Lord was shortened, and his ear no longer open to the cry of the oppressed.

For, though all nature is, in truth, an exponent of the judgment as well as of the beneficence of God, there are times and places in which his right hand, as it were, is more manifestly bared. It is true, that at all times every evil act calls the avengers around us; but their footsteps are silent, and their approach unperceived. The bow is bent, and the arrow on the string; but still the man will not turn, and goes on to lose the very perception of his danger. Then the hearts of many are hardened, and the feeling of deep and eternal truths becomes so blunted that (according to the ancient complaint) there is no vision in the land. That is to say, there is no earnest sense of things deep, holy, and divine. Pride and its insolence, wealth and the lust of it, softness of life and the hardness of heart which it begets, tread down weakness, or turn an indifferent ear to its uneasy pining. The fat oxen gore and thrust the lean. Men look abroad on the terrible amount of physical or moral evil in the world, without conceiving that it is their business to remedy it. They live for themselves. They forget that want and wretchedness are on earth the very bodily representatives of Him, who, holding the keys of life and death, will control their destiny in heaven. "Have they no knowledge?" saith the Lord of a generation thus depraved, that they are all such workers of mischief, eating up my people as it were bread<sup>1</sup>? Such a general insensibility can have come only of one

<sup>1</sup> This complaint shows that the writer of Psalms xiv. and liii. did not intend to describe the depravity of all mankind, however his words may be accommodated.

cause: "The fool must have fancied in his heart, that there is no God."

In such times the fervent spirit is tempted to wish for one of the days of the Lord. "Arise now, O Lord, for thy name's sake," is the instinctive prayer, unconsciously trembling upon the lips. "O Lord of hosts," said the angel in Zechariah, "how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation?" Such is also the strain to which men of vehement temper exalted by fervid piety, are often apt to incline. They see great evil, and they would have it redressed by Him who is mighty. Nay, they almost think the honor of their Lord concerned that fire should come down from heaven, and avenge his insulted cause.

Yet methinks, brethren, there are many reasons why even in the worst times we should not wish to hasten that day which will in appointed course assuredly come, and will not tarry. For of old the Prophet rebuked the Israelites who not so much out of pious zeal, as out of ignorant impatience, would fain have hastened the day of the Lord's visitation. "Woe unto them," he exclaims, "that say, where is the day of the Lord? the day of the Lord is not light, but darkness; it is a great and a terrible day." That seems to mean, whenever a general alienation from the law and the Spirit of God has gone so far as to bring down some startling national judgments, we shall then be so far from wishing for some more visible token of the Divine government of the world, that it will be felt only too sensibly, too keenly, too painfully. As with the maidservant, so

with the mistress; as with the beggar's child, so with the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth on his throne. It comes, a general, all-embracing, crushing calamity. The diseases of which the first seeds were sown in some Indian jungle, may march, like a disembodied army, from city to city, until it sit among our homes, an unwelcome, but too familiar guest. It may visit chiefly the hut of Lazarus, but there it may gather strength to force itself into the halls of Dives. So the moral fever which rends social institutions, may seem provoked by a certain crookedness, which perhaps after all, none but God could have set straight; but when it has infused the strength of madness into whatever is uneasy, and discontented, and criminal, rolling along turbid masses to overthrow all established restraints, and making no difference between the holy and unclean, who will not say, such a day of the Lord is a day of blackness, and not of light? Who would not rather have joined in that wholesome prayer, "Give peace in our time; because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God"?

Instead therefore, brethren, of encouraging in ourselves impatience for some great day of the Lord, let us rather engrave upon our minds a conviction, that such coming will be at last inevitable. Instead also, of thinking that we ourselves must enjoy exemption in such a day, let us recognise ourselves as parts of a whole; not being lightly afflicted in the affliction of our people, nor forgetting that rarely, and to few, is the refuge of some Zoar permitted. We may estimate the character of such general judgments as are here

alluded to, by reading the description of those of old; how God caused a destruction of fire (probably volcanic) to come on the cities of the plain; how the firstborn of Egypt, and the host of the Assyrian were alike smitten, each in one night; or how the day of the Lord is with the prophet Joel an army of locusts, marching in array, and leaving famine in their rear; how with Zechariah it is the gathering of nations against Jerusalem; with our blessed Lord, it is the desolation of the temple, and the treading of the holy city under foot; and again, with Him, it is that last day of the Son of man which cometh suddenly as a thief in the night. It is rather a certain deference to custom, than any idea of their being essentially inappropriate, which withholds me from adding modern instances. For there is no more now than of old any great stroke or crisis in any national history, which does not attest the finger-work of a Ruler, and which does not carry a certain moral on the face of it, legible even to those that run. What might not be said of the downfall of that old heathen Rome, which seems to be shadowed forth with such grand imagery in the book of Revelation? What of the general overrunning of an effete and corrupt civilization, by the rude, but comparatively virtuous warriors of the North? What of the rise and rapid sweep of Mahometanism, as in its kind something purer than what it overthrew? or what again of our own Reformation, and of other events of an analogous kind?

In some of these things light and blessing may preponderate, in others darkness and judgment; but in

all there is a Divine finger, and, as it were, a day of the Lord. By some more than others, but by all in some degree, we are reminded, that the God whom we serve is a living Dread; He is not confined to past ages or their records, but is in the midst of us; He speaks not merely in Oriental phrase, but in every language, to every nation of the world. Moreover, in all such events we may recognise instances of a Providence, to the duration of which no limit can be assigned; types therefore and foreshadowings of a greater judgment, to be accomplished whenever the guilt of the world shall have filled up its measure, and history reached its close.

What then is the sort of temper, or cast of sentiment, with which the idea of any such great national visitations should be blended in our minds? How ought we habitually to think of all signal days, but especially of one, the final day of the Lord?

As citizens of a nation, or members of a community, we should be aware that crime inevitably brings down judgment. The very success which attended the cruelty and avarice of the Spanish conquerors of the New World, paved, by steps which may be traced, the way for the comparative degradation of one of the fairest countries of Europe. So, any general vice, any laxity of sentiment as regards the great rules of right and wrong, or the primary laws of God, scatters broadcast the seeds which we ourselves may observe germinate, but of which the full harvest may be reaped only in the third and fourth generation. The habitual neglect of duty by any body of men,

calls forth from many minds a feeling of disapprobation, which gradually unites and gathers head, until it becomes a swollen flood. The irreverence again, which some even well-intentioned men think it no harm to foster, for the sake (as they imagined) of calling attention to greater things, propagates itself over space, and becomes aggravated in degree, until at length it takes the form of profaneness, or hardens into a surly and a wayward zeal, more skilful to pull down, than to build. Consider again the ignorance, supinely suffered, or even selfishly encouraged, by those who should have thought more worthily of whomever God made their fellow. Into how many a form of popular delusion, bigotry, fanaticism, and immorality, does not such a current flow? In these, and many other such cases, the effect, as regards nations, may either be sudden or slow; but it is certainly unerring. It goes on rising and reddening from the faint streak of the first quickening of morn, until it breaks, perhaps, lowering and stormy, in some great and terrible day of the Lord. Knowing such things, brethren, be it our prayer to God, that the ten righteous men may never be wanting in any city or district of our country; and while we labour in whatever is our vocation, that the Lord's coming may ever be to bless, rather than to curse, be it also our wisdom to have our loins so girded, that, if our Master come suddenly, he may find us ready. Let not only the sprinkling of the blood of the great Sacrifice be on the doorposts of our temples, our palaces, and our homes; but let us so put away all bitterness of spirit, and so give the answer

of a good conscience toward God, that when the avenging angel comes, he may pass by our dwelling, and say, Here I have no errand; here dwells a mightier power than mine. It is chiefly indeed, on turning from a national to a personal view of the subject, that the necessity arises of laying stress on the idea of suddenness. The Son of Man cometh like a thief in the night. This is true of every judgment that can affect us personally. What we say in the proverb of the pitcher, is a homely expression of nearly the same sentiment. We run a certain moral risk ninety-nine times, but the hundredth is fatal. We place ourselves in temptation, we contract habits, we provoke judgments. Can we wonder if we fall, if we are entangled, if we are ruined? Yet, we did not foresee it; there was no reason, we fancied, why the vengeance should come to-day rather than yesterday. But in one night the seed of all our misdoings has shot up into a tree; we are eating compulsorily of its bitter fruit. Guilt has brought shame; vice has entailed a hopelessly broken constitution; idleness and extravagance have brought poverty upon us, like an armed man.

*Watch*, therefore, brethren, each man over himself personally; in his thoughts, his prayers, his actions, his habits; for the day of the Lord may come suddenly; and when we say peace, because we have put humour for piety, it may be destruction unawares.

There is yet one different aspect, and that admitting of two divisions, under which I wish to consider this subject. Though in the sacred writings we read of many days of the Lord, there is throughout the



course of the world's history, considered as still lasting, emphatically one. The use made by St Peter on the day of Pentecost, of the words of the prophet Joel<sup>1</sup>, shews that he considered the great day of the Lord, previous to the day of judgment, as being the Gospel Dispensation—as commencing therefore with the first instruction of the Christian Church by the Holy Spirit. Frequent and varied as had been the previous manifestations of the Divine dealings with mankind, they sank into insignificance compared to that last revelation by the Son, which not only completed the others, but rightly interpreted, and assigned to them their true value. The days of old had severally brought instruction; but this day of the Lord's appearance, and his Spirit's coming, might well be called the completion of the seasons, the last dispensation under which it would ever please the Maker of the world to give his revolted handiwork a trial. Either in this last time, this last of the earthly days of the Lord, the world must be saved, and arrive at the highest perfection of which it is capable, or it must remain only that it be judged, and that the elements melt with fervent heat. During this day of the Lord, then, our Heavenly Father is trying us by every display of his goodness and wisdom. He is pouring out his Spirit upon all mankind; He is bringing nations daily more together; He is inspiring them with a perception of the blessings of peace; He is inviting them to turn their swords into ploughshares; He is unlocking daily the stores of creation more abundantly to our investigation and our

<sup>1</sup> They were in the First Lesson for the day.

enjoyment; and as He earnestly persuades us that we have all one Lord and Father,—for we have all received the adoption of sons—so He invites us both to know him, our Father, better, and advance his kingdom on earth, by practising that commandment, in which the whole law is comprehended, “Love one another.” Such is the dayspring from on high which has risen upon us. Such is the day, not of the Lord’s wrath, but of the Lord’s mercy, in the light of which we are now invited to walk.

Only, extending as it does over vast regions of space and epochs of time, this day is not so much sudden as grand and solemn, like those days of eternity, the span of which to our numbering is a thousand years. Hence it fluctuates, now with its hour of storm, and now with its gleam of sunshine, or the dew of a heavenly blessing. So it has come to pass in this day that the light is neither clear nor dark. We have to deal with a system of inherent crookedness; a system in which pain, want, shame, are not only found, but must often even be welcomed as remedies against still greater evils. How great then must be those evils! They are a licentiousness daring all things, a malignity violating all things humane, and a blasphemy sinning against all things Divine,—thus constituting a train of evils apparently so unnatural—for they are so unwise—and yet having their roots so deeply ingrained in the very capacity of better things, that we can neither sufficiently condemn nor yet utterly eradicate them; we know not where to place their origin, save it be in the malice of what appear to be “airy principalities,

wicked spirits hovering on high." Having all around us, whispering in thought, laughing out in scoff, and bursting into wickedness alike bad and pitiable, such principles of enmity, both to our own peace and to the Lord whose servants we are, we cannot always discern our landmarks; the light is not clear; there is a deep moral disease in the world; and, followers as we are of the good Physician, we have not hitherto healed Adam of his deep wound. He still lies fallen, or at best limps, with his heel bruised by the serpent; and it is well if only in a moderate degree we ourselves partake of his lameness. So the light is not clear.

Nevertheless, brethren, let no man persuade us there are not more with us than against us. On our side are the very healing pains, which no malignant power, but a chastening Father, sent among mankind, the recallers of wandering children, and remembrancers of his holy name. On our side are the wholesome sternness of shame and true remorse; all the wonderful machinery of the human conscience; the remembrance of the rock from whence we were hewn, and the capacity both of being touched, and of touching others, by the abundant loving-kindness of Him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. On our side is the melancholy testimony of all past experience, and daily more and more with us is the brightening hope of the future. The world is improving; for the honour of God, and for the love of man, let us improve it more earnestly. So, if the light be not clear, still less will it be dark.

And as of the body, so of the limbs. What is true of the prospects of the Christian religion will bear

applying to the daily life of each of its believers. Our light is not always clear. For, whatever agencies or possibilities of ill thwart our Master's kingdom, threaten also the spiritual life in each one of our souls. Baffled in some labour of love, embarrassed by some perplexing difficulty, disheartened by a want of lively faith in the ever-abiding presence of our holy and unseen Helper, we are tempted to take hand off the plough, and say, "Depart from us, O Lord, for we are sinful men." But that, brethren, was not so much true humility as a want of knowledge of the power and the wisdom of the Master from whom he would have turned, which made the chief apostle so speak. When he rose, in obedience to the gracious command, "Fear not," and when he girded himself in a higher spirit to his work, his Lord enabled him to win men. So now, whether it be a difficulty in shaping our own conduct and controlling our own passions which besets us, or whether it be a protracted struggle in any labour of faith, and patience, and love, be we persuaded that if the light be not clear, still less is it dark. Possibly, such a state of risk and uncertain twilight, as may render us more dependent on the will and guidance of a higher power, may be the most wholesome probation for us here. Perhaps, as any man approaches nearest to the perfection of the Christian temper, he has a frame of sentiment equally compounded of these two opposites, hope and fear.

Thus souls by nature pitched too high,  
By sorrow plunged too low,  
Meet in the Church's middle sky,  
Half way 'twixt joy and woe.

Such a frame comes of hope in God and fear of ourselves. It has purged away reckless self-confidence and eagerness for enjoyment, in some trial improved by a recognition of the Divine Sender; but it has also looked up through the cloud, and been cheered by a gleam from the highest light, to rejoice in tribulation and to labour in hope. Thus it is sobered by fear, and encouraged by hope in One who cannot deceive.

Such is probably the kind of frame in which men most nearly walk with God. More certainly such appears from experience to be the frame in which they most perseveringly and successfully do his will on earth. So they seem to work most in harmony with his laws; having soberness rather than rapture, peace rather than joy, perseverance in well-doing rather than fervour of ecstasy. Often even the day of their work is unknown to men, but yet a day known to the Lord. To our eyes it may be an obscure twilight, not day, nor night: nevertheless the path of the just brightens more and more. Take we only heed, dearly beloved, that our labour throughout this day of life be *in the Lord*; and it shall come to pass, that *at evening time it shall be light*.

LAMPETER, 20th Sunday after Trinity, 1851.

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## SERMON XXIII.

### *THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS.*

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*It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath settled by his own power. Acts i. 7.*

It has often been felt that it was not altogether easy to decide in what sense the Apostles so frequently speak of their Lord's second coming as a thing near at hand. One of the frequent burthens of their doctrine is the shortness of the time. "Surely, I come quickly," is a saying of their Master's, with reference to which not only each man's life, but the whole tenor of his relations with the world around him, should be shaped.

Now it may fairly be remarked, that many such passages in the apostolic writings may be explained by connecting them with those signal changes which either actually arrived, or already threw their portentous shadows across the world during the first half century of the Christian era. We seem to be warranted by St Peter in saying, that the day of Pentecost, on which the great Pleader on part of God with man first taught the passing away of things old, was itself one of those days of the Lord which are great and terrible, yet a beginning of the times of refreshing; great indeed in its revelations, and terrible in the transfer of sympathy

and devotion which it required; yet refreshing the weary and heavy-laden by the removal of a burthen, and the opening of a way of peace.

Nor again can we doubt, that before the generation which heard our Saviour had passed away, all that nearer circle of things predicted had found its fulfilment, which He described by imagery, significant perhaps of something greater to come, as the gathering of the vultures and the passing away of heaven and earth; though the carcass was almost certainly the Jewish nation, the heaven was the horizon of hope which surrounded the earthly kingdom of David, and the earth was the soil of Sion, whose stones were crumbled into dust<sup>1</sup>.

Again, if time permitted us to look on to that crash of society which attended the downfall of the Roman empire, we should there still more evidently read signs which mark a day of the Son of Man; signs of nation rising against nation, of the coming of the Judge of the whole earth out of the clouds which often surround the path of his providence, to humble her who

<sup>1</sup> There are indeed strong expressions in the Greek liturgies, in which the Church thanks God for having *already brought her through a resurrection into the kingdom of heaven*. These may be added to other reasons of time, &c. for thinking that our Saviour spoke only of the fall of the earthly Jerusalem, and the establishment of the heavenly on earth. Some ingenious suggestions to this effect may be found in some recent sermons on the Apocalypse by the Rev. P. S. Desprez. But to follow out this interpretation thoroughly might be to fall into the error of Hymenæus and Philetus: and I know not how otherwise to avoid the conclusion stated lower down, that the Apostles were not careful to distinguish between two homogeneous sets of predictions. It may be added that St Paul bids Timothy keep the commandment until our Lord's appearing; but cannot have meant him to keep it only until the fall of Jerusalem.

had humbled many realms, and to let her sit in turn a widow.

But yet, striking as is the fulfilment which we might thus read of many of the denunciations of Him who wept over Jerusalem, or of his Apostle who saw from Patmos the phials poured out on the seven hills which were the seat of Paganism<sup>1</sup>, we cannot say that even the most pregnant and startling changes in the world's history altogether meet the full compass<sup>2</sup> of those expressions which speak of the end of all things being nigh, even at hand. For setting aside those passages, of which there are many, which contain predictions of some approaching catastrophe among the kingdoms of earth, we also observe a presentiment, not always careful to fashion itself into form, but evidently pervading the mind of the writers, that many questions, which otherwise might have been considered differently, were for them decided by the nearness of the hour, when the grave should give up its dead, and mankind obey the summons to meet their Judge. "Now this I say, the time is short." "Be careful for nothing: the Lord is at hand<sup>3</sup>." Hence a superficial probability of *each man's death* being intended. But this neither suits the breadth of the scriptural expressions, nor the deeper meaning that we are to take an interest in the course of God's

<sup>1</sup> It will be obvious that I can consider the sayings about Babylon in the Apocalypse as at most only referring to modern Rome in the sense of warnings, parallels, or analogies; and that only so far as circumstances may warrant; but not at all as predictions.

<sup>2</sup> See note in the preceding page.

<sup>3</sup> In 1st Corinth. xvi. 22, the word *Maranatha* should be stopped as a distinct sentence, like *ὁ Κύριος ἐγγύς* elsewhere.



world. Nor, indeed, has any explanation been given of the passage in the 1st Thessalonians (ch. iv.) so natural as the one which considers the Apostle Paul as considering it probable, that he himself and his contemporaries would survive, so as to be caught up into the air, simultaneously with those who had already entered into their rest.

Is there then any reason why we should endeavour to evade the natural meaning of the words? Why not accept the fact as it appears, and then account for it as we may? It is clear, that at the very date of our Lord's ascension into Heaven, his disciples were still so far from being fully informed as to the times and the seasons, that they brought the subject forward, even considered in its decidedly earthly aspect, in one of the very last enquiries which they addressed to the Master they were about to lose. Why then should not a certain indistinctness of view have continued until a later period? Were there not indeed some reasons which would be likely beforehand to bias the conception of the sacred writers upon this particular subject? and may we not also now observe some beneficial results from that conception which in fact they entertained?

If any one reads attentively the 24th chapter of the Gospel of St Matthew, he will find apparently a blending of two distinct sets of predictions running together in artless parallel, just such as is the sort of parallel which the providential recurrence of the same sort of events in the world's history presents to our mind. Only one broad distinction is clearly laid

down. While a period for the fulfilment of the first series, the human judgment, is fixed within the lifetime of a generation; we, on the contrary, are told of the last judgment, "Of that hour knoweth no man, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father." Alike as they were to be in many respects, in predicted certainty, in unexpected suddenness, in rapidity, in terror, and in completeness, yet in one thing they were entirely different; the first was near, the second had no date assigned. The general impression left by the whole parallel, if not by other such, upon the reader's mind is, that the course of Divine providence loves to repeat itself<sup>1</sup>; as if the great strokes on the anvil of destiny became louder and heavier, until repeated judgments end in a consummation, transcending whatever has gone before. It would not then be wonderful if the affectionate anticipation of the disciples, overleaping the intermediate stages, should have been willing to hasten forward the end, when He who had been rejected of men should take to himself his great power, and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Rather indeed their own language, as in the question immediately preceding our text, shows that they made no clear distinction at all times between things temporal and things eternal; and we can readily conceive the authors of that question, in the very simplicity of their minds, to have been slow

<sup>1</sup> As I regret to have no sermon, fully written, on the subject of the "Types," so I include the present one, partly for the sake of these suggestions, which, taken in connexion with the *Sermons on Prophecy*, will indicate what I conceive to be the most reasonable view of a question which has embarrassed many persons.

in learning of what kingdom our Lord spake, "Behold, I come quickly." They may have caught all the essential spirit of the warning which bade them "*watch*, for the Son of Man came as a thief in the night," and not therefore necessarily have been skilful to distinguish which watch of the night was passing. or when the hour of cock-crowing should be. But I have spoken merely as if this view were probable. Whereas really, is it not certain that such must have been the case? For, if not even the Son upon earth had commission to divulge the last hour of the world's career, how should his disciples have learnt it? or why should they not have suffered their own presentiment, however it may have been formed, to betray itself in the general cast of their writings, without therefore binding us, either to explain away their language, or to alarm ourselves with the idea that it contains any dangerous error? Surely it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father had established by his own power.

But here many pious persons will present themselves, who have no objection to admit the above view as correct up to the day of Pentecost: but after that date, they conceive it would be of dangerous tendency to suppose that the Apostles, either in writing, or (on the same principle it ought to be admitted) in acting, should not have been led into *all* truth; or, in fact, should have erred as regards the times and the seasons. It deserves then to be noticed, that all this objection derives its entire force from the supposition, that the inspiration of the Apostles meant something

like partaking in the Divine omniscience, or that the same persons could not be inspired and at the same time but partially informed. Whereas all that supposition is utterly contradicted both by the simplest facts of the Apostles' own narrative, and by the very modest extent of the claims which they make for themselves. Nothing can be more conclusive on this point than the instance of St Peter. That great Apostle, who assuredly came behind in no gift of the Spirit, was nevertheless so far from being fully informed on so important a point as the conversion of the Gentiles, that some time after the day of Pentecost he required enlightenment upon it, by a special vision from heaven. Nothing indeed can be farther from the sacred writers' mind, than any idea of concealing the gradual manner in which the knowledge of the Apostles grew, and the imperfections to which it was liable from their personal failings, as well as the accessions which it received from their experience. We may gather not obscurely, by comparing the Epistle to the Galatians with the Acts of the Apostles, what different shades of opinion among the pillars of the Church had to be harmonized together in that famous decree, which yet from its tone of mingled freedom and moderation, may well be said to have seemed good to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the first council of Jerusalem. For so it seems as if the Eternal Wisdom were pleased to work; granting to no man such an immunity from error as should permit him to forget that he has his treasure in an earthen vessel; nor yet suffering us while on earth to know otherwise than in part; yet so balancing and

moulding together the imperfections, the sore contentions, and the prophesyings in part, that the general aggregate of the mass shall be as the three bushels of meal in which the quickening leaven continues to ferment; and so that the very foolishness employed in the service of God shall put to shame the wisdom of the wise.

It need not therefore surprise us, if those, whom we call not indeed masters, yet now look upon affectionately as our fathers in the faith, had also their childhood of learning, through which they grew up to the stature of scribes perfectly instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven. But now, if in anything this was the case, upon no subject is their knowledge so likely, at best, to have required gradual and successive steps of growth, as upon that secret of unsearchable awe, the time of their Lord's coming to judge the world. The only room for doubt indeed is, whether we are not contradicting Scripture in admitting for a moment the possibility that the Apostles ever could attain to knowledge of the precise time. For, since it is clearly revealed by Him who is alone the Author of our faith, that the Son of Man cometh suddenly, even as a thief in the night, and since it is the characteristic of suddenness to be unexpected, and since no man is informed by the thief of the hour at which he will come, it would seem a necessary conclusion, that the final judgment is an event for which we ought always to be ready, but to which no man can presume, save in devout consciousness of its daily nearness in possibility, ever to assign a time.

Supposing, however, this last reflexion on the *impossibility* of the sacred writers knowing the precise time of the day of judgment should be thought too great a refinement, we have still sufficiently clear evidence as to the fact itself. Observe only the answer which our Lord gave to the enquiry, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" "It is not for you," he says, "to know the times and the seasons." As if he had said, "What is that to you? follow you me. But you shall receive power for your work, after the Holy Spirit has come upon you; though I do not say you shall then receive unnecessary knowledge. There are some things of which even I, in my Mediatorial character on earth, was content to become ignorant, having no commission to reveal them. So are there some things which the Holy Spirit, the strengthener for all needful purposes, may not show you. Some the Father has settled and kept secret by his own power. Others you can only understand when experience shall have shewn you the variety of circumstances to which my kingdom must adapt itself. Yet, lo, according to your need, I am with you alway to the end of the world. I am with you; as in your writing, so in your preaching; as in your thinking, so in your acting; as in your proclaiming the gospel, so in your appointing of presbyters and deacons to continue it; as in one part of your work, so in all that tends to the edifying of my Church. Fear not therefore. You shall receive strength for that which I have given you to do; but it is not for you to know the times and the seasons."

May we not then here safely conclude, that as, upon many subjects not unimportant, the Apostles acquired knowledge gradually, so it might be left for experience to throw a clearer light upon some of our Lord's predictions of the several days of the Son of Man, than they would naturally appear in at the time they were uttered? Supposing then in the meantime any presentiment of the nearness of the last Advent had been formed in the sacred writers' minds, either by our Saviour's actual language, or by the connexion of thought in which that language was viewed, this feeling would, like any other, find a ready expression among that outpouring of the thoughts, which is one of the greatest charms of many of the Epistles. It is quite idle to desire that those Epistles should have been written in a tone of thought or language alien to the author's time and country; for if they had been, how could we have defended their genuineness?

But now, brethren, may not some useful purposes be promoted by the very fact of the sacred writers having entertained such a conception of the nearness of the day of judgment, as does appear, upon a fair examination, to have been the case? Is not there a lesson thereby implied for our practical consideration, if only we are wise to read it? As none can count the drops of rain, so probably no one may be able to number the years, which in the unknown mind of the Almighty may be intended to succeed, before time is swallowed up in eternity. But it would seem as if the first preachers of the Cross had not been careful to count them; but rather had their eyes fixed in faith upon

that region far away, in which the exceeding magnitude of the objects made all the intermediate steps dwindle one by one until they were concentrated in a speck of time. They had seen the Desire of their eyes exalted with great glory to his kingdom in the heavens; they had heard He should come again. What greatness could seem great, or what duration of time could appear long, to them between two such events? Already that consciousness which was composed half of human impatience and half of Divine faith, sprang forward to the time when the gifts which their Lord had received for men should have become effective to the casting down of all opposition, and the kingdoms of the world should have become the kingdoms of their God and his Christ. It was promised that the knowledge of Jehovah should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; they knew not, perhaps, how many thousands of years may be required for the flow of such a tide; but to their eager and trustful eye each of such periods was but a day. It is probably one of the latest of the Epistles<sup>1</sup>, in which the magnitude of the scale of the divine dealings is suggested to Christians, as a reason for patience; yet, however much the Apostles may previously have supposed the day of the Lord to be near at hand, we cannot conceive them ever to have been ignorant that a day of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity might be as a thousand years.

<sup>1</sup> See note on the 19th Sermon in which, preached as it was before a more intelligent audience, I thought it right to speak more explicitly on this point of Biblical criticism.



There is probably no one present who has not occasionally remarked how the apparent size of objects is diminished by distance. That which we fancied at some distance would be a hill easy of ascent, turns out, when we approach it, to be a succession of alps upon alps. So if we were removed from this earth only as far as one of the nearest of the stars, the whole globe we tread, with its oceans and mountains, would appear a smaller speck perhaps than that very star now does to our eye; or even be invisible from the vastness of the distance between. Will then any man in his senses doubt that whichever of us hereafter is permitted to look back from "some far moment of eternity," may behold all the lives of all the generations of the world, dwindled, in comparison of the eternal duration that has succeeded them, into a very speck of time, such as the imagination can scarcely conceive for smallness, even into a moment, or the twinkling of the eye? For what, after all, is the difference between the effect of space, in making height a thing dwarfed, and that of duration in making time dwindle? Surely it were insanity to conceive, that He who has sown the field of heaven, as with seed, with worlds which no man can number, cannot give his redeemed a length of existence, to which our life shall be as little as a speck is, when compared to the universe.

Some such thoughts may enable us to understand how the Apostles, without needing the imagery of sensible things, but rather by the strong perceptions of the spirit, saw afar off such a preponderance of light and glory, that they were careless of enquiring how

many steps might lie between. What matter whether our uneasy slumber be a few hours more or less, if when joy and health visit us in the morning, all that we dreaded turns out a dream?

But now also, dear brethren, such thoughts should teach us betimes to take true measure of things temporal and things eternal. The train of sentiment which I would here suggest to you, might easily, either by temperaments naturally morbid, or in that listless yet speculative apathy which is the temper of the far East, be carried to such excess as to unfit us for practical life. But with our own boasted activity, the restless striving of men on all hands for power, pleasure, or sin, there is little danger of my winning from you too long or too earnest a consideration of the things which nevertheless concern your eternal peace. A little hour of thought as to the tenor of your lives, some endeavour to value things now by that standard which you will acknowledge hereafter was their true, unerring test, and some aspiration to the Father of all Spirits to keep you pure as strangers and pilgrims in this world, are all I dare ask; and more than some of you will grant me.

There are those who will not be persuaded that for doing now what is right in their own eyes God will hereafter call them into judgment; they cannot believe that the humour or passion which now seems to them so legitimate, or so irresistible, will pass away, and leave shame. They cannot think that whatever temptation now besets them, has only its little hour; so soon passeth it away; so soon the entire form and fashion of that in which it is rooted must itself perish.

Do we then pretend that there is no strength in temptation? or that this life, which we now have, is not a scene of enjoyment, wonderful to attract, and also of suffering terrible to endure? Far from it, brethren.

This earth, on which we live, is vast. The duration of its existence may be long. Its enjoyment is keen. Its pain may be crushing. Its affections are absorbing; and its reproaches hard to bear. It has power scarcely to be limited, in moulding our desires, our hopes, our feelings, and all things save one. Say all that can be said of the world that now is, until the cry arises in us, Who is sufficient for these things? But after all, this we say, that compared to the eternity of the life set before us in the heavens, our time here on earth is short. The Lord is at hand. It remaineth that those who weep be as though they wept not, and those who rejoice as though they rejoiced not. There are tears which shall be wiped away, and there is a joy which must wither. Whichever may happen to be the case with you now, it seems to give your whole being a colour; to be, in short, the crisis of your lives. Nor is it for a moment attempted to persuade you that such things are for the time indifferent. Yet it remaineth that they all be counted by you hereafter as though they never had been. Lift up therefore the eyes of your mind, and take true measure, as if it were of the grass which to-day lives, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, on one side; but on the other, of that Word of the Lord, which endureth for ever.

We have now seen clearly there may be two modes of measuring the same thing. But the true measure,

brethren, must be, not the one which suits our feelings now, but that which will correspond with our conditions for ever. He then is wisest who begins earliest to make here, whatever reckoning even the fool will make of things hereafter. What a man shall suffer, or enjoy, or pay, or receive, at his inn by the wayside, must be comparatively insignificant to him in whose steady gaze the mansions already rise of an eternal home. That affliction, which we acknowledge to be but for a moment, ought in reason to appear comparatively light. That shortsightedness, which suffers our best affections to be entirely absorbed by things of earth, (classing together, for the moment, things good and bad,) cannot at least be the highest wisdom. Especially the trifling with any kind of sin, which some persons, especially the young, are apt to permit themselves, must be the pastime of fools. Nor is it much more reasonable to glide through life without considering how many talents we have received, and what account we are prepared to render. For those holy teachers who represent all other earthly distinctions as little, still hold out one immutable distinction which will go on widening, like some river fed by many streams, until it become a gulf wide and impassable. We read of its remaining, that those who weep be as though they wept not, and those who rejoice as though they rejoiced not; but it is nowhere written, that they who are without fear to add sin to sin shall be as though they sinned not, or they who have done God's work upon earth, as if He who is faithful and true could ever forget his own.

Rather, he who is unrighteous now is likely to be unrighteous still. We know not the times and the seasons; but we do know there are irreconcilable contrasts in the nature of things between those characters of which He who is now ascended into Heaven is the Author and Preserver, and those others which find their representative in the enemy whom our Lord saw like lightning fall from Heaven. But when He who is ascended shall come again, asking account of the fruit of the vineyard from which He cast out those idle husbandmen, not all the mercy and free grace of the Gospel will exempt us from the necessity of answering, one by one, for our use of that very grace; and this upon such a principle that every man living shall undoubtedly be judged according to his works. He who is the Giver of all things has indeed given us, according to his good pleasure, unequal advantages; but He who is the Judge of the whole earth will give us equal judgment for whatever advantages we have received. This then we say; to-day is an accepted time, and a most propitious hour, for whoever, weary of that in which there is no peace, will knock at the gate of Heaven. For our great Intercessor has gone, as it were, within the veil. Ask then for spiritual strength, and you shall receive it; desire earnestly the true wisdom, and He, who is the strengthener of all them that are feeble will teach you words that can never pass away.

But of the times and the seasons to come, we only know, brethren, their utmost conceivable length must be, in the truest sense, exceedingly short; and if any man here is inclined to build, in idle procrastination, upon

the utmost extent of that shortness, to such a one there remains the solemn possibility, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

After all, the Son of Man cometh as a thief in the night.

*Preached on Rogation Sunday in 1852.*

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## SERMON XXIV.<sup>1</sup>

### *THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER, OR THE TRUTH AND THE BOOK.*

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*After the way which (they) call heresy, so worship I the God of my  
Fathers. Acts xxiv. 14.*

THERE certainly was a time when to be a member of the Society of Friends implied something greater than more or less harmless peculiarities; for they bore witness before princes and people, in bonds and persecution, for the great principle of the Spirit of the living God, and were not ashamed. If then one of them had been asked, Do you not worship the God of battles? he might possibly have answered, No; and again, if he were told, that the Almighty is called in the Old Testament the Lord of Hosts, it is conceivable that he might have rejoined, But we have better oracles. Immediately upon this might have been raised a cry, This man is an infidel, for he denies the Scriptures; or rather an atheist, for he disowns the Lord of Hosts. Yet the Quaker again might plead, that he had learnt to know God, not so much by might, or by power, as by the Spirit wherewith He has taught us to call Him, "Our Father, which is in Heaven." He might go on to affirm,

<sup>1</sup> Preached, before the Vice-Chancellor and University of Cambridge, in King's College Chapel, on March 25, 1855.

that in thus recognising the eternal I AM, under his more blessed character as the Prince of Peace, he did not for a moment deny the same Lord to have been known as Almighty by the patriarchs, and as Eternal by the Jews; but still, that the sundry times and diverse manners of ancient revealing had somewhat melted in the brightness of the revelation of that Spirit, which cometh forth from the Father and the Son. Thus, that many things “said of old time<sup>1</sup>” in the rigour of the letter, must now be interpreted, or rather expanded, in the freedom of life; and so, after a manner, which, even if it were called heresy, was yet the manner of Christ and His apostles, he worshipped the God of his fathers.

Nor would such an answer be unlike in spirit to those which the great Apostle of the Gentiles often urges in vain upon the attention of his irritated countrymen. For it is not only at Athens that he is called an introducer of new divinities; but at Jerusalem he is denounced as one who taught<sup>2</sup> apostasy from the sacred place, and the Book of the Law, and the worship of the God of the Hebrews. [Difficult as it may be, with our scanty information, to reconcile some parts of his conduct—such as the “being at charges” in participation of sacrifice in the temple, with his argument in the Epistle to the Galatians—we are yet able to observe a wonderful blending of courage with delicacy in his management of the many intricate questions which are

<sup>1</sup> Compare the running antithesis, St Matth. v. 21—27, 31, 43, with Jeremiah xxxi. 31, 32; Hebrews viii. 8—10; 2 Corinth. iii. 4—14; 1 Corinth. ii. 7; iii. 1; 1 St John ii. 20—27.

<sup>2</sup> The common charge against the early Christians was, with Jews, infidelity; with Gentiles, Atheism. The word heresy had not yet acquired its technical sense.



proposed to him.] He does not think that the Father of the spirits of all flesh was a God of the Jew only, and not also of the Gentile, yet he concedes there may have been great advantage in those opportunities of enlightenment, and in that faithfulness<sup>1</sup> of the Divine promises which belonged to the chosen people of old. So he admits even the Law of Moses to have been in its idea holy and pure, yet he contends, that this sanctity was not from the fact of its being imposed with penalties at the Exodus, but from its participation in those older and holier principles of which Abraham had the promise, and even the Gentiles a scripture in their heart. The Law, then, so far as it is Mosaic, and penal, or even outwardly preceptive, can never be the highest guide of those who have the mind of Christ—yet its ancient records may still be useful; and not only would he quote them largely, in addressing Jews who “desired to be under them,” as he quotes even Gentile prophets in addressing Athenians; but his own mind was evidently imbued with reverential affection towards those songs of Zion which (as the liturgy of his race) he must often have sung in solemn services, and to those deeply-searching prophets whose fervent spirit, ever penetrating from the form of godliness to its power, was so often a type of his own.

Again, the Apostle does not seem able to contend, that the entire scheme of Christianity is legible in the Old Testament with that perfect clearness which some

<sup>1</sup> Romans iii. 2; where *ἐπιστεύθησαν* may either mean *believed upon*; or possibly, as the reasoning, and also a Hebrew idiom, rather suggests, were *found faithful*. The rendering *committed* can hardly be right.

modern interpreters would compel us to acknowledge; and our favourite citations of prophecy find in him little place; but yet he thinks there was always an unity in the Divine dealings; the predestination of the Gospel may have been veiled, but yet it must have been predestined<sup>1</sup> as a scheme for calling men to repentance from all eternity; and though this veiled design had lurked under the choice of temporal Israel, and under the offering of slain beasts, and the form of written precepts—yet its meaning (mystery) would be revealed in the uncovering to all men of the face of the Father—in the lively sacrifices of men saying by the Spirit of Christ, “Lo, I come to do thy will<sup>2</sup>”—and in the purified vision of consciences quickened by a faith, which should draw life from love, and thereby be the fulfilment of the highest law.

[Thus is St Paul a servant, faithful to Christ, and yet wise in the wisdom of Moses; bringing out of his treasury things new, without dissociating them rudely from things old.]

Now we cannot say that any change so great as that heralded by the first preachers of Christ is to be expected in our own time. For certainly the words of Christ, in their highest meaning, do not pass away. May there not, however, be something sufficiently analogous for the great Apostle's example in this, as in other respects, to have been written for our instruction, though upon us the last dispensation is come? Even in the same generation there are many persons who may claim alike the designation of Christians, yet whose

<sup>1</sup> First chapter of Ephesians.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Psalm xl. 8, and Hebrews x. 7—9.

conceptions of the Gospel differ so widely that no one of them could adopt the views of any other one without a change of mind so sweeping as to be painful. Even in our own lives, if we have made it our business to study religion, either as a matter of thought or of practice, we cannot but be conscious of passing through certain changes of apprehension. When we are children we think as children; and when we are men we put away childish things. But, much more, in a succession of generations, very great differences may be expected to prevail in the mode of holding a truth essentially the same<sup>1</sup>. The Christianity of the early Fathers of the Church is hardly that of St Augustine; still less is it that of St Anselm<sup>2</sup>, or of Calvin. The great object of our faith remains the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; but those reflexions from his thoughts, which are thrown figuratively<sup>3</sup> on the mirror of our understanding, may be darker or more distinct, from day to day. Perhaps even the very truth which saves the soul, whether it be called faith, or love, or Christ, or the Holy Ghost, may be held with more or less clearness. Or, if this be thought necessarily simple and uniform—still there is a point which may be difficult to define—but there is a point at which the truth

<sup>1</sup> See some admirable remarks on this, needed now more than when they were written, in Professor Hey's *Norrisian Lectures*, edited by Bishops Kaye and Turton.

<sup>2</sup> A sufficient notion of St Anselm may be got from some recent *Bampton Lectures* by Mr Thompson; but the accomplished author seems to be hardly aware how much more profound what the Fathers meant was than the supposed improvement of St Anselm.

<sup>3</sup> ἐν ἀνίγματι. 1 Corinth. xiii. 12.

of things eternal comes in contact with our experience of things temporal, and there the knowledge, the manners, the favourite studies of every generation of Christians, may indefinitely vary, and give a bias, in proportion, to their mode of conceiving of some of the associations of their faith.

Thus, in our own time, our wider acquaintance with both nations and languages, our habit of scrutinizing ancient records, and comparing different faiths together, as well as the cultivation of those mental inquiries which approach, if they do not touch upon religion, have all tended to awaken a spirit which some condemn, and others welcome, but which most observers will admit to exist. Even if discoveries, which must affect the general shape of our conceptions as regards Divine Revelation, are not now made for the first time, yet a knowledge of such discoveries, confined perhaps once to a few scholars, is now diffused amongst masses of men; and the real significance, or the import, with which some characteristics of our sacred literature are pregnant, is far more clearly discerned, from the opportunities which we enjoy for comparing such things with similar phenomena elsewhere. There is a leaven which may have been in the world before, but which is now fermenting through the three measures of meal. Hence arises the question, how a growing spirit of scepticism in some quarters, and of perplexity in others, ought to be met by those who are responsible both to God and man for the stability or the progress of religion in the world. And if it be now, as ever, the abiding sentence of the Almighty, that whoso rejects knowledge shall be rejected

from being priest before Him, a few suggestions on this subject may well claim your attention, brethren, in these walls, which were consecrated to be a nursery of the faith of Christ, and upon this our solemn Feast-day.

There are some persons who look on all the tendencies above alluded to with undisguised alarm; and others who do so with hope, or at least, with perfect tranquillity of faith. Does not this difference of view imply, that there are also two sets of persons, one laying exclusive stress upon the evidences of the body, the other regarding rather those of the mind<sup>1</sup>. It is obvious to remark that these two aspects ought to be combined rather than separated; but we find that a tendency in either one direction or the other is apt to preponderate so much as to give a practical impress to a man's character, and to the cast of his belief.

The first set consider man as a mere animal, and divorce him by nature from God and from immortality.

<sup>1</sup> I hope no one will affect to translate this into *objective* and *subjective*; words which I never use, partly because they are not in my English Dictionary, and partly because I am not sure of my understanding them, while it is evident, from the different senses in which others use them, that many persons do not understand them alike. The discourse is not here of absolute and relative truth, or of reality and belief, but rather of signs affecting the senses, and truths apprehended by the mind; e. g. when we read, "God *said*, Let there be light," must we understand the emission of a humanly-sounding voice, or may it mean the operation of the Divine Will? I have already remarked that to me thoughts and inferences appear as trustworthy as sensations. Nor am I here discussing a kindred question, how far ideas may be often clothed in a dress of phenomenal narrative or parable. Another instance might be, Does our rule over the brutes depend on the speech in the Bible, or on capacities given us by God, and observed by the sacred writer?

They may do this, either from a materialising philosophy of the senses, or from an ultra-Augustinian emphasis on the fall of Adam; but in either case, they leave as wide a gulf between God and mankind, as that which Mahomet was unable to fill. As to any pure voice of conscience, or better aspiration of the heart leading us upward, they almost boast of considering all such things utterly untrustworthy; they cast a disdainful glance over the great history of the Gentile world, and find in it no traces of the finger of the God of the spirits of all flesh; and if they are asked, How then does God teach man? they answer, By Moses on mount Sinai, and by our blessed Lord in Jerusalem; and these two revelations are so attested by miracles, that we cannot doubt their truth, while on account also of the same miracles we have our attention imperiously arrested by the Book which records them; and are then led to regard that Book as not only true, but exhaustive of truth, and unquestionably the very Word of God. Thus only, as they conceive, can we arrive at the satisfaction of certainty; for, as to any agreement of the contents of the Book with our moral and intellectual being, that is at best a secondary and an untrustworthy kind of evidence; our great foundation is miracle, and our only result is the Bible.

On the other hand, our second set of thinkers look upon mankind as something different from the beasts that perish. They regard him rather as the child of God; fallen indeed, or falling ever, below that which his Maker calls good, and his own earnest expectation groans for; yet still trained by Providence; appealed

to, however indiscernibly, even from childhood upwards, by something of spiritual experience; and, from the mould in which he was formed, not destined to find rest or happiness apart from that Being whose image he bears. Nor is this, as they contend, a fanciful conception, but one to which all history bears witness; the greatest men, and the noblest nations, and the most enduring virtues, having been everywhere sustained by some vestige of such a belief; nor ought it to be allowed, according to all human analogies, that the admixture of various errors is any argument against a truth, which may yet survive, as the redeeming principle, among them. So that just as Christianity had the law as its schoolmaster among the Jews, it may also have had a preparation of men's minds by training for it, from the great teachers of righteousness in Hellas, and from the masters of polity at Rome. And just as these to the ancient Gentile, so our conscience with all our experience of history may be to us now, what Moses and the prophets were to the Jews, in respect of the great Teacher and Saviour to come.

Here then is a tone of thought very different from the one first described. If we attempt to illustrate the two from ancient heresies, we might say the first has an Ebionite tendency; the second is in danger of some form of Gnostic error<sup>1</sup>. Or, if we consider them both as interpreting things connected with Scripture, the one

<sup>1</sup> We are less fitted to meet some modern forms of thought from the very meagre and uninformative manner in which our common manuals treat the ancient heresies; Dr Burton, for instance, merely calls them absurd, without explaining them; whereas their train of thought is often worth considering.

would say, that the phylacteries of the Jews, with texts, were worn in obedience to express revelation; the other would see in them a strong figure<sup>1</sup> of exhortation corrupted into a formal usage. So by *Urim and Thummim*, one would understand, that a light, grossly physical, and yet supernatural, falling on the high-priest's breastplate, made its stones oracular; while the other would imagine rather a symbol of that light which God gives to his upright ones in the clearness of understanding. Perhaps, again, the Shechinah of the temple (or even of the tabernacle) might admit of a similar variety of interpretation.

Again, if we ask the followers of the two tendencies we are describing, for their watchwords, one will reply, the infallibility of the Bible; but the other will say, the truth of Christ. So, the one would define Christianity as the religion contained in the Bible; whereas the other would call it the Gospel, as being good news; or the doctrine of the Cross, as being self-sacrifice; or, in short, the religion of Christ. The one then, pays its principal allegiance to the Scripture, which is true; but the other to the Truth, which is also written. Again, the one finds a duty, and even takes a pleasure, in opposing the Bible, by means of the sharpest conceivable contrasts to all the whispers of natural equity, to the purest yearnings of our affections, and to the presentiments of our conscience; whereas the other never hesitates to

<sup>1</sup> Compare Exodus xiii. 9—16 with Numbers xv. 38, 39. Does the greater literalness of the later book (considering also the signs of compilation in its 21st chapter) betray an interval of some generations?



say, that the Bible itself is either a providential embodiment of those very things, which are the witness of God in man, and cannot be disparaged without blasphemy; or else at least it is a result, for which under the good guidance of God, they had been preparing the way.

It is now easy to understand why the advocates of our first manner of thinking are so disquieted by anything which tells, I do not say against the general truth, but against the infallibility of the Sacred Records, which they make not only the symbol, but the foundation of their faith. For they have, as it were, desecrated life and all its experiences; they have in effect, if not in intention, removed God from it as far as they can; they think all its fair humanities, whether art, or music, or literature, have at best little to do with religion, and are perhaps dangerous to it; hence they survey their progress with indifference—diversified only by fits of panic; while, as for the deep sense of things eternal, wherewith our Maker encompasses us—the crying out of the heart and the flesh for the living God—the instantaneous response of every uncorrupt conscience to the sayings of our Saviour upon the mount—and the calm happiness which comes of well-doing—they have either so materialised<sup>1</sup> their own souls, that they are not conscious of such experiences, or else they think, that apart from a particular fashion of speech, such things are utterly untrustworthy, and possibly may be of the devil. In short, they have staked their cause upon one argument. It may be doubted if

<sup>1</sup> i. e. in St Paul's language, made "carnal."

that is the one St Paul would have recommended, or if it would have been chosen by those who had been longest at the foot of the Cross. "Except they see signs and wonders they will not believe." When, then, their tendency of opinion reaches its full result, such men's religion becomes neither a leaven fermenting through human nature, nor a vine rooted and growing, nor a living and a moulding power; but it is as an image fallen down once for all from Heaven; with no analogy in nature; with no parallel in history; with no affinity among the Gentiles; and (except for some special reasons) with no echo to its fitness from the human heart. Hence, however, it is only natural for any encroachment on the solitary ground of such persons' faith to appear "dangerous;" and since the great recommendation of all their cast of sentiment was its fancied safety, they are in proportion alarmed. Thus it is painful to them even to be told of little discrepancies in our sacred books; they cannot understand that a true teacher of religion may be imperfectly informed in other things: though analogous instances might strike them every day; even the idea of religious growth, which pervades the whole Bible, is not kindly accepted by them, or is confined to one or two great epochs of dispensation; and as for the many inquiries of great literary and historical interest, which the criticism of the Sacred Volume involves—they have so prejudged such questions, that they either will not acquire the knowledge requisite to answer them, or they shut their eyes to any fresh form of the answer, as it appears in the light of to-day; or they even raise an outcry against

the investigation of any more consistent student, as if it were a triumph of "infidelity"—and thereby they most unwisely make it so. Certainly, their heart does not stand fast; for they are afraid when any fresh tidings come, either from general knowledge, or from fervent and self-sacrificing devotion, or from a critical study even of the Bible.

But turn we now to those, who, reverencing the letter at least as deeply as St Paul did, have yet grounded their faith mainly on the Spirit, without neglecting the aids of the understanding. They are persuaded that they may justify the ways of God by rendering to the intellect its own, and yet render to faith the things that are faith's. Nay rather, they think that doing the one is a condition necessary to the other<sup>1</sup>. Clearly then, it does not disturb them to learn that the purpose of God, though veiled from the Jews, (*μυστήριον*) had made the Gentiles, even of old, heirs of a certain salvation of the soul. Hence they approach with calmness such questions as, How far Moses took anything from the wisdom of the Egyptians, or whether Hellenising Hebrews<sup>2</sup> had used language adopted by St Paul and St John; they can even welcome any fresh

<sup>1</sup> The saying, *Believe, that thou mayest understand*, belongs more to principles than to facts, and may be as much misused as its opposite, *Let me understand, that I may believe*. For it has been applied to darkness as often as to light. Hence it might be better to say, *Love the truth, that thou mayest know it*. For this would give nearly the same lesson, and be less liable to abuse.

<sup>2</sup> Good Jacob Bryant wrote a book to prove that Philo resembled St John; and although his chronology requires to be inverted, his proof of the resemblance holds good.

instances that God has left himself nowhere without witness; and, since both providence and grace have ultimately One Giver, they can easily believe that the one has been a cradle for the other. Perhaps, indeed, the wonderful correspondence between the spiritual judgments of the Gospel and of the purest searchers after godliness elsewhere, is not one of the least arguments for the true divinity of Christ. For it shows that the Wisdom which took flesh in Him came from the Supreme and Universal Teacher of mankind. Nor, again, do Christians, such as I now speak of, require a great gulf between the experiences of devout men to-day and those of the servants of God in the days of old. One of their great reasons for believing things written in Scripture, is, that they experience the same. They are persuaded of the comfort of prayer, the peace of trustfulness, the joy of thanksgiving, the rightful rule of holiness, the necessity of repentance, and the wholesomeness of a discipline of conscience; and they gladly welcome the forgiveness of sins<sup>1</sup>. Because God teaches such things now, they more easily believe he taught them of old. Nor have they any desire to doubt, that He who thus fashioned the hearts of His people, may also have exhibited great wonders of old to their external sense. The great majority of them, indeed, implicitly believe the letter of every miracle in the Bible; yet they would never be so illogical as to make these remote and often obscurely-attested events the proof<sup>2</sup> of things being true, which they know by expe-

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Justification by Faith.

<sup>2</sup> This is almost too forcibly put in the striking *wish* of Mr Maurice,

rience, and which are so far more important in saving the soul alive. Hence many of them believe the miracles for the sake of the doctrines; and this order is more truly Christian than the converse. Some of them, however, would remark, that the modern definition of a miracle is far too technical; in the old Hebrew mind everything was a great wonder which caused a present awe of the great Governor of the world. Thus the morning roll of the tide, and the stormy wind arising, were great wonders; and though other things, to which the same name is applied, may seem more extraordinary, yet we can believe the Divine agency in them to have marched along the silent path of forethought rather than with the Cyclopiian crash of strength and force. As to our Saviour's miracles, indeed, they are even wrought generally with the concurrence of the receiver's faith; and they are all signs of mercy, or parables full of meaning; and, again, so far as the element of power is brought out in them, it is rather as exemplifying the rule of a very present God over nature than as "evidence<sup>1</sup>" for truths, which are themselves far more evident. Hence, whether an event should be considered as more or less miraculous, is always a question to be decided by the probabilities of the particular passage, whether prose or poetry, contemporaneous or remote;

that persons, resting their faith as Christians on the ten plagues of Egypt, might find all Egyptian experiences tend to shake it. See his Sermons on the Lessons from the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Has not the ambiguity of the term *evidence* somewhat misled our modern apologists? It may have meant clearness, or *visibility*, as of Truth and Justice; but they take it in the sense of legal testimony, and so entangle themselves in special pleading.

and is never to be prejudged as if it affected either way the foundations of our faith<sup>1</sup>.

From such a tone of thought as regards miracles, we may expect those who entertain it to approach the more important subject of prophecy, without suffering their reverential prepossessions to take an undue form of prejudice, or any disappointment of them to be a cause of overwhelming alarm. Suppose that what Bishop Butler said hypothetically on this subject should now be come actually upon us—suppose that things often treated as direct literal predictions of Christ should have been spoken primarily of some king, or prophet, or nation. Such a result may cause great distress, and

<sup>1</sup> Suppose any one brought up to understand as literal prose Cowper's hymn,

He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm—

would it be an utter loss to him to discover that the terms were figurative? or might they still express to him a truth? Apply the same idea to many of the Psalms, such as the 18th, which the Hebrew title makes a description of David's deliverance from Saul. May it not also apply to other poetical parts, such as part of Habbacue, and to such fragments as are expressly quoted from the book of *Jasher* (I do not say all that have been conjecturally ascribed to it,) especially if some of them closely resemble the Ode in Habbacue? But it will be said, here was a *poetical intention*; and it is a wide leap to interpret plain prose on such principles. This distinction should have its weight. Still the fondness of some nations for apologue or parable; the tendency of *ideas* to clothe themselves in narrative; and the possibility of traditions, once oral or poetical, having subsequently taken form in prose; are all things which may suggest themselves to critical readers, and should weigh for what they are worth in each case, and for no more. But if scholars wantonly exaggerate difficulties, or state them with indecency or scoffing, the case is different. I have never intended doing so, and have no sympathy of feeling with any one who does.

even desolation of mind, to those who make Theology a mere balance of texts, and make the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, depend upon the critical accuracy of illustrations<sup>1</sup> borrowed in the New Testament from the Old. But no such grievous consequence follows to men who have been so born of the Spirit, that they believe Christ's words because they are spirit and truth. They are no more surprised that their Saviour should appear under earthly images in the Old Testament than that He should be called "the carpenter's son" in the New; their conception of Him is not formed by balancing the imperfect utterances of childhood against those of the full-grown stature of the servants of God; but it rather takes in the height of that great idea at which the Church arrived when she stood as it were by the goal; for then she looked back with understanding on the race of Him, who<sup>2</sup>, though manifested in the flesh, had been justified in the Spirit,

<sup>1</sup> If any one, in reading the New Testament, will write down with a pen the first twenty-five quotations he finds from the Old, and then compare each with its original context, he will see how many are illustrations rather than predictions. "Jehovah's calling Israel, when young, out of Egypt to be His son," may serve as an instance. The books which give most aid on the subject, in English, are, perhaps, Davison's *Lectures*, Dean Lyall's *Propædia*, and Mr Maurice's *Kings and Prophets*. But we have not one thoroughly explicit and clear. Bp Randolph's *Comparison* is very uninteresting. The more popular manuals, especially those of Scottish origin, are written in defiance of all critical probabilities; and whoever makes his faith a problem of Hermeneutics, to be defended by *such* means, will find the more he grasps it the more it will dwindle like a snow-ball in his hand.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy iii. 16, where I have ventured to paraphrase that reading of the Greek, which seems on the whole best attested. It should be compared, for the sense of *angels*, with ch. v. ver. 21 of the

and who, though seen only by Apostles, had been preached to nations; and whom she found so believed upon, as a king, throughout the world in which He once had not where to lay his head, that she felt, surely God must have received him up into glory. For they all along admit the idea of training; and so, the principle of life and of growth. It was natural for the people of Nazareth<sup>1</sup> to see in Jesus only Joseph's son; it was natural for the old Hebrews to think of the righteous king, and the afflicted prophet, and the chosen people, before they rose to the conception of a verily Divine wisdom and love, uncovering itself in substance, and pervading the conceptions of all nations.

But where, then, some one will ask, are our "evidences"? It may be answered in two words, the character of Christ, and the doctrine of Christ. Or to say the same thing in the words of St Paul, we preach Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God. If priests embody the idea of consecration, He is holy—if prophets, that of knowledge or vision, He is the great speaker of truths which touch the heart—if kings imply rightful rule, He, or His Spirit, is that

same Epistle; and for the general sentiment, with Romans, ch. i. vv. 3, 4. On this, as on other questions of *text*, I am glad to fortify myself with the authority of Dr Tregelles.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, in the Socinian controversy, sufficient account has not been taken of the *period* to which texts belong, or of the expansion of the sacred writers' own conceptions. But the idea of *growth of doctrine*, so fruitful in explaining Ecclesiastical History, may be soberly applied even to the New Testament. This is probably one clue, as the union of humanity and divinity may be another, to the solution of some apparent contradictions. St Mark is certainly before St John; and probably also St James before St Paul.



which should sway our thoughts—if the poor and afflicted are the special care of God, was ever affliction like His?—if teachers do a sacred work, if martyrs throw a fire upon the earth which is not quenched, if the shepherd to his flock, and the husband to his wife, and the pastor to his people, have all some office of beneficence, and so something of sacredness from their having been designed in the love of God:—all these things are, as St Paul says, “brought to a head in Christ;” He concentrates and exhibits in his life, in his doctrine, in his death, and in the Holy Spirit whereby He ever lives, and wherewith He animates the whole body of His Church, the Divine perfection of those excellences, of which fragments, and shadows, and images, are scattered throughout the world elsewhere. And however true it may be, that our religion is in its essence attachment to Christ as a Person, this can never mean to his name, or to his power, as if He were jealous or arbitrary; but rather<sup>1</sup> to that goodness and that truth which He embodies, and which commend themselves by their excellence to the faith of the pure in heart.

Those then come to Christ who believe in the spirit of Moses and of Isaiah, and who would have listened to each prophet of truth from time to time among the Jews—who would stand by Socrates as he drank his hemlock among the Greeks—and who, in short, in all times and places, would acknowledge the authority of whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever are lovely, whatsoever are of good report. Now this kind of free allegiance, from love, and for the excellence of the Object's

<sup>1</sup> The issue raised in this sentence is vitally critical, and pregnant.

sake, is perhaps not exactly that of those who, starting with the Bible—or even with the Divine authority of our Lord—infer from thence dogmatically the excellence of his precepts; but it is more like that of the Apostles, who saw the superhuman beauty of our Lord's truth and patience, and his majesty made perfect through sufferings; and then reasoned<sup>1</sup> upward, Surely this was the Son of God.

Such a mode of thought has also the advantage of starting more from the purer moral instincts of our nature. Yet it is so far from fearing reason, that it finds, in a way, confirmations everywhere. It is under no temptation to wrest texts into conformity with systems; or to congeal the outpourings of passionate penitence into materials for syllogisms; or to make traditional applications of prophecy, whether due to the devout rhetoric of the early Church, or to the very imperfect criticism of St Jerome<sup>2</sup> in his Vulgate, either parts of the faith, or perilous supports of it. It can readily welcome with hearty gratitude whatever discovery in science, or language, or history, may so far dissociate from the Jews, those who may yet, like the Jews, remain children of a Divine Promise; nor is it with dismay, but with thanksgiving, that it sees many

<sup>1</sup> The Apostles felt goodness, and inferred God. We assume God, and demand æknowledgment of goodness. Which of these is the more wholesome argument? The answer may somewhat depend upon what conception of Deity we start with.

<sup>2</sup> In Haggai ii. 7, the Hebrew says *desires*, or *desirable things*, and the context shows silver and gold to be intended. But St Jerome said, *Veniet desideratus omnibus gentibus*, and we have followed in his track. But are those who clamorously make such things proofs of Christianity its friends?

of their temporal images, time after time, give way to that eternal pattern, which Moses saw in the Mount, and which the servants of God may now see more clearly revealed to them in conscience, and experience, and understanding. For that which is written in the nature of things is shown us by God.

But, if persons thus thinking, are less restrained from the free adoption of whatever consequences the mind may work out, so long as it works in righteousness, they are far more bound to purge their mind's eye, and to keep the whiteness of their soul unspotted from evil. For their faith has only ceased to be a congeries of human propositions, that it may better become a divine life. And, although some of them may meditate with Butler, how far the mysterious grace of God is given us on a system, so that, if we saw the whole range of things, it would appear to us regular and natural, rather than contra-natural—yet the belief in that “Spirit which is holy, supreme, and life-giving<sup>1</sup>,” is far more a governing principle of their lives, than can ever be the case with men who substitute the bonds of system for those of truth, and the letter for the spirit.

Hence it will be found, all great reformers, either of life or institutions, have had something in them of the spirit we now speak of. Nor has it been quite unknown even to men in other respects of most opposite views: it has burst forth now in that earnest preaching which rent the veil of the invisible world, and made men tremble or exult at the present realities

<sup>1</sup> Nicene Creed.

of judgment or salvation; and it has wrought again in those who reared once more the standard of the Cross as a thing to live by, in a luxurious and garrulous age; it allies itself most eminently to the Gospel<sup>1</sup>; but it can also flow along the channels of the Church; its more prominent advocates in England have been men whose eccentricity somewhat marred their usefulness; but it may well harmonise with the affectionate soberness of that Prayer-book, which it should forbid us to sever so widely as we do, from the inspiration of our Bible<sup>2</sup>. It woke in Reginald Pecock some presage of the

<sup>1</sup> The frequent parade of the term Gospel, in association with the most deplorable temper and objects, should not make us forget its true meaning, as "good news" of the highest freedom before the Father of our spirits. It may be feared, that in recoil from those who would fasten the accidents of St Paul's phraseology (*Pauline figure*, Augsburg Conf.) upon us as a bondage and a mannerism, some very admirable persons too much deny themselves the comfort of dwelling on the abundant loving-kindness of our heavenly Father, and accepting our salvation as in all its parts a free gift. The fault of some is not that they make salvation too free, but that they curiously blend Antinomian phrases with a hard legal spirit.

<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the Church of England upon "Inspiration" is expressed alike with precision and devotion in her Collects, as, for example, in two used in the Communion-Service, which any clergyman, about to criticise these Sermons, should first consider. The excellent Bishop Burgess appears hampered by the ambiguity in the popular use of the term, but yet ingenuously confesses that he derived more benefit from Ridley's *Farewell to his College* than from some portions of the Bible. So we cannot but see more of the Spirit of Christ (and this is the movement of the Holy Ghost) in our Collects and Eucharistic Ritual than in the books of Leviticus and Chronicles. So most persons, if they reflected, would acknowledge that Thomas-a-Kempis and Leighton are more wholesome reading than the Song of Solomon. But why should they not be so? If Christ has improved the world, and his Church is better than the ancient Jerusalem, the indwelling Spirit, being better, must speak

Reformation, when as yet this College was not; it found no obscure utterance in Hooker, when he taught that "the rules of right conduct are the dictates of right reason;" it is assumed, either tacitly or expressly, in the grand discourse of Jeremy Taylor; it is more formally put forward by Barclay, whose broad and unqualified propositions are yet on more than one account well worthy of being studied; it moves, though in fetters, across the pages of the more learned Puritans, and especially of Milton; it takes a form of wisdom, toleration, and faith, amidst the vast learning of Cudworth, and his kindred teachers of a godly humanity<sup>1</sup>; it is not alien to the Evangelical Platonism of Leighton; nor is it quite quenched by the arrogant temper of Warburton, whose learning and whose courage alike led him to acknowledge some light in the Gentile world; but with greater fondness, it loved to linger amid the deep reasonings of Butler, prevented only by his Laodicean age from bearing in him its full fruit; it took a form of subtle idealism, and allied itself to "every virtue" in Berkeley; it had no mean representative in this place, in the thoughtful candour of Professor Hey, over whose moderation any brief triumph of zeal in our time may only pave the way for a dangerous reaction: it sounds, not ineloquently, but too uncertainly, from

better words. These things are so evident, that they would never be denied but for the assumption of inspiration's meaning dictation, and the fear of supposed evil consequences. But the regard of a good churchman for his Prayer-book, or of a Wesleyan for his Hymn-book, is what we ought to have for our Bible, and would best secure the true interests of religion.

<sup>1</sup> E. g. John Smith, who has been praised in such opposite quarters.

the deep struggles of Coleridge; and it found a happier expounder in him whose recent loss we may well deplore, the Guesser at Truth, and the preacher of the Victory of Faith<sup>1</sup>. *Est et hodie, nunc tacendus: olim nominabitur*. In our own time, indeed, those who entertain it at all, have felt themselves urged alike on the negative side by the necessities of historical criticism, and on the positive by the deep hunger of men's spiritual affections, to cross over more and more from the scribe to the Apostle, from the letter to the Spirit, from the formula to the feeling which engendered it.

How many questions now arise before me which time will not permit to handle at due length! Will this freedom, which even the highest controller of our destiny is in some measure awakening among us, always know where to stop? It will be led, perhaps, by the inexorable laws of historical criticism to alter our modes of conceiving of some portions of Hebrew literature, which are comprehended in our Bible; and even questions apparently barren<sup>2</sup>, may sometimes, to the scholar, be fruitful in inferences. It may also observe so much

<sup>1</sup> I might too have mentioned the Christian Philosophy of Vicesimus Knox, but the jaundiced tone of the book prevented me from cordially recommending it; though many parts of it, and especially what is said of *Evidences* in the Appendix, would illustrate more than one of these sermons.

<sup>2</sup> It is morally certain, that the books of Joshua and of Daniel are each *four hundred* years later than the date ordinarily ascribed to each; and this fact leads to inferences which it would be wise to meet practically by either modifying our cycle of Old Testament lessons, or by giving the clergyman at his discretion a liberty of doing so.

of local or sensible imagery<sup>1</sup>, in describing things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, that it may almost indefinitely lessen the field of intellectual definition, though sparing that of conscientious expectation. It may for instance somewhat merge the doctrine of a resurrection in the idea of immortality<sup>2</sup>; and it may lay not so much stress on a day of judgment, as on a Divine retribution. But will it also apply St Paul's idea of our Lord's laying down his Mediatorial kingdom<sup>3</sup>, not to any one moment hereafter, but to that period, whatever it may be, in each man's life, when he has been brought by the Son to the Father: so that it shall be no longer necessary for the Son to pray for men<sup>4</sup> so enlightened, since the Father himself loves them, because they have conceived of Him according to the picture revealed of Him in His well-beloved Son? How far will this be a dangerous intensification of what is yet a true feeling of the *economic* nature of the office of the *Mediator*? Or will the same spirit go so far with any, as to think it unimportant through what imagery God may frame in us thoughts of things ineffable; so that whether memory or fancy

<sup>1</sup> If any one considers the various opinions on the state of disembodied souls before the Day of Judgment, he will find them turn on a clash of conflicting metaphors, or on a balance of allusions, each borrowed from some temporal usage.

<sup>2</sup> As Bishop Butler evidently did, but Isaac Taylor's *Physical Theory of a Future Life* may be read on the other side.

<sup>3</sup> Read carefully 1 Corinthians xv. 24—28; but compare Pearson on *Sitting on the Right Hand* in the Creed. It was reckoned a peculiarity in the profound Origen that he prayed only to the Father through the Son: but, at the altar, the whole African Church, and perhaps the Church Catholic, did so.

<sup>4</sup> St John's Gospel xvi. 25, 26, 27; Colossians i. 15.

lend the shadow, and whether faith<sup>1</sup> be nourished more from fact or from thought. still the real crisis of our souls shall hang upon our ever holding fast that eternal substance of the Divine Light, the radiance of which is wisdom, and truth, and love, and which enlighteneth every man, both at its coming into the world in the flesh, and also long before? This last would sound like a dangerous revival of Gnostic imaginations. Yet would even the wildest flight of such aberrations be so dangerous to the spirit of religion, as that secular-minded Ebionitism into which the opposite tendency, the mere sifting of the letter, is ever apt to drift, the moment it escapes from the influence of tradition? To answer all such questions would require a prophet rather than a preacher. One thing however is clear, and that I desire to say very seriously; the spirit of inquiry is most likely to go hand in hand with reverence, if no other checks be imposed upon it than such as come of conscience and of truth. This also, brethren, let us be unshakably persuaded of, whatever other things fail, the attempt to realise in ourselves the mind which was in Christ Jesus has never been found to fail any man. This, after all, seems to be what constitutes a Christian.

The prospects of an attack must depend very much upon the conduct of the defenders. If those who have leisure, learning, and authority, encourage persons less informed, not merely in entertaining as opinions, but in asserting as foundations of the faith, things which scholars are ashamed to say, there must

<sup>1</sup> Compare Hebr. 10th and 11th chapters.



come a crash of things perishable, in which also things worth preserving may suffer shipwreck. Whereas, if the same persons were wise to distinguish eternal meaning from temporal shape, it would still prove that though the Church is beaten by waves, yet she is founded on a rock.

Here then the special subject of this discourse may be associated with one of the occasions of our meeting here to-day<sup>1</sup>. We have somewhat learnt, and may be taught more deeply hereafter, what great embarrassment, as regards the spirit of ancient statutes, may come from such a profession of abiding by their letter as can only be blind or insincere. Some seven years ago I fully explained from this place the principles involved in that subject; and a slight instalment of the requisite expansion<sup>2</sup> has since paved the way for greater things. But may God of his great mercy, and by his ever-present Spirit, grant that institutions outweighing this College in importance, as all the galaxy of Heaven outshines each particular star, may never be smitten with a like blindness on things of even greater moment.

Therefore, to each one here my sacred office warrants me in saying, "Meditate on these things; give

<sup>1</sup> Annunciation Day being also Founder's Day at King's College.

<sup>2</sup> I say expansion rather than reform. For it is too hastily assumed by external critics, that timidity or slowness in improvement implies greater abuses than really exist in our Universities. Since my much canvassed Sermon on the *Mind of the Founder* applied to our own times, our students have been permitted to enter the schools. But this is not an adequate stride for a generation. Possibly different preachers now await us.

thymself wholly to them ; study to show thymself a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of *truth*<sup>1</sup>." No greater subject can in our own day employ any man's noblest energies than preservation or renewal of the truth of God, not fettered overmuch by the human accidents of our ancestors in the faith, yet with reverential tenderness even for these; and with a flow of the life, if it may be, in the body which God has given it.

We may say with Cicero, *Multa in Collegio nostro præclara*, but there could be nothing more illustrious than for these walls, founded as they were for "the dilatation of conning"<sup>2</sup> as well as for the confirmation of believing, to send forth many servants of the living God, devout, wise, and, if needs be, self-sacrificing, to wield weapons of comfort and of patience in the battle of the Truth.

Lastly, we commemorate to-day not only the foundation of our College, but also the overshadowing of humanity by the thought of the Most High, wherewith that Holy Birth of the Blessed Virgin is announced, which should be called the Son of God. Hence our associations easily travel to that mystical woman of the Apocalypse, who is clothed with the Sun, and crowned with the stars, but who yet is persecuted by the old Serpent, the enemy of all good, and driven into the wilderness. Thus the Church, and may I not say the Spouse, of God is often persecuted, but not cast down; forsaken, but yet having children whose names are in

<sup>1</sup> There is a note on the word Pharisee in a former Sermon.

<sup>2</sup> From King Henry's Will.

the Book of Life; for her firstborn, and also her Redeemer, is the promised Seed, the Son of God made Man, that so the sons of men may become children of God<sup>1</sup>. Pray we then, and also strive, that whenever the floods of iniquity are poured out against her, and she is driven in all her sore travail into the wilderness, there may yet be found men faithful to stand by her, and powerful to say, alike with reason, with learning, with devotion, and with sincerity, *Fear not; thou hast borne a man-child; and though He is caught up to the throne of God, yet shall He rule all nations with either a sceptre of righteousness, or else with a rod of iron. Call His Name therefore not Ichabod, for the glory is not departed; but call Him Immanuel, God present with us, now and for ever.*

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle and Gospel for St Mark's day, especially when read together, may confirm or illustrate what is here said.

As in the present sermon I touch the question of spirit and letter, so I have handled more fully that of spirit and form, or of unity and union, in a Visitation Sermon preached at Cardigan in 1851.

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## EXCERPTA

### EX CONCIONE<sup>1</sup> AD CLERUM OLIM APUD CANTABRIGIENSES HABITA.

DE CARITATE autem paullo difficilior oritur quæstio. Neque tamen vel hoc in loco verear affirmare majus caritatis studium apud antiquitatis studiosos viguisse quam apud eos, a quibus formulæ recentiores sunt perfectæ. Quid de Liturgiis, ut aiunt, civilibus dicam? vel in quinto Novembris die, vel in Januarii tricesimâ celebrandis? Hujusmodi omnia, qui velit, tollat: nihil impedio: quicquid enim, quod minoris jam pretii sit, inter religiones retinueris, negligentiam parit, et contagio quodam sanis nocet. Nihil autem prohibet, quin gratiarum actio, cum recordatione divinæ in republicâ providentiæ quotannis celebretur. Jam vero etiam in Articulis quot sunt, et quam difficiles controversiæ? Prudenter quidem, in universum æstimantibus, diremptæ videntur, et a viris non sine causâ derelinquendis tractatæ: tamen ex illis multæ sunt ejusmodi, quas non sine periculo etiam ad pacem adjuvandam moveris. Si Ecclesiæ rectoribus olim visum fuerit, ut harum consimiliumque rerum aliquanto latior sit interpretatio, vix vehementer videtur esse repugnandum. Si quis autem ad Symbolum, quod Athanasii pseudepigraphum est, pergat, sive illud Hilarii sive Vigilii opus sit, etiam hic inter veritatem ipsam Symbolo conclusam et clausulas illas, quæ horrendum aliquid sonant, omnino distinguere meminerimus. Fateor equidem mihi non minus quam Taylora nostro, sufficere, sanctissimum virum, Athanasium ipsum; neque dolendum fuisse, si inter Symbolorum

<sup>1</sup> Hæc ex concione festinanter et, quod solet in tali re fieri, ad perfungendum munus scriptâ, non Latinitatis causâ excerpimus; sed ut sententiam nostram per multos jam annos constanter esse servatam monstraremus.

tam Constantinopolitani quam Nicæni limites Ecclesia constitisset. Hic vero animadvertendum est, sensu quidem liberrimo et ad caritatem maxime accommodato hæc et consimilia sæpe Præsules nostros interpretatos esse. Restat tamen vel in verbis quiddam, quod aures hodiernæ reformidant: sunt enim, quibus etiam verba ipsa recitantibus obversatur vel Miltonis, viri summi et castissimi, imago; vel Guistonius, studiis ingenuis deditus; vel Guatesius, ejus hymnos et poemata liberis nostris in manus tradimus, virum ipsum affirmantes proculdubio atque in æternum esse perditum. Quem longe satius fuisset Deo omnium judici committere. Jam, si quis clausulas illas resecandas esse censuerit, minime quidem ille ab antiquitatis studio recesserit, necesse est; sed potius ad S. Athanasii ipsius regulam, fidemque Nicææ sancitam, viam redeundi muniturus sit. In hac igitur re, ut in cæteris, vera illa et primæva antiquitas cum caritate non repugnat. Cum vero, quicquid auribus mentibusque hominum inoleverit, non sine periculo rejiciendum esse videatur—scilicet, ne fidei negligentes magis quam caritatis studiosi judicemur—haud scio an media sit via reperienda, quâ patefactâ, non male fuerit reipublicæ consultum. Videte, quæso, in uno tantum die, scilicet in Dominicâ Trinitatis, si (pace Præsulum) fas esset hoc Symbolum recitari, an aliquod foret (neque læsâ veritate) pacis adjumentum. Tum enim occasio commoda: de placito ipso mos est disserere; et quicquid durius dictum esse videatur, facile esset explicandum.

Sed de his hactenus. Certi enim fines sunt, quos, si quis fidem a Domino nostro traditam fovete velit, is omnino metuat transcendere.

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